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HUGO GERNSBACK  
EDITOR

AMAZING STORIES — SCIENCE FICTION

JULY  
1927

# AMAZING STORIES



Stories by  
**H.G. WELLS**  
**A. MERRITT**  
**A. HYATT VERRILL**

EXPERIMENTER PUBLISHING COMPANY, NEW YORK, PUBLISHERS OF  
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PORTRAYING HIS IMMORTALITY

# AMAZING STORIES

Vol. 2 No. 4  
July, 1927

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### Our Cover

This month depicts a scene from "Radio Mates" by Benjamin Witwer, in which the scientist—at one time the victim of a vicious plot—is ready to turn the aerial switch, which will cause his sweetheart, in the mammoth transmitter tube, to disappear gradually and be transmitted through space by ether wave action, and be reproduced at some distant point, where he expects to follow immediately in like manner.

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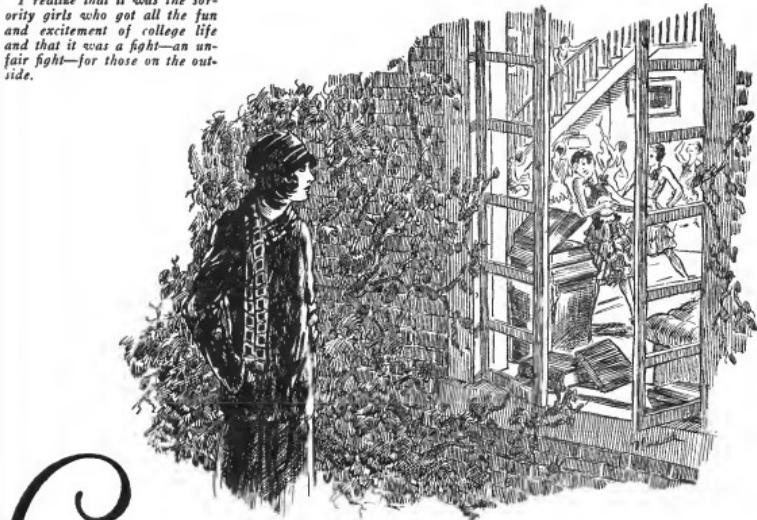
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I realize that it was the sorority girls who got all the fun and excitement of college life and that it was a fight—an unfair fight—for those on the outside.



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# AMAZING STORIES

THE  
MAGAZINE  
OF  
SCIENTIFIC FICTION

JULY, 1927  
No. 4

HUGO GERNSBACK, *Editor*

DR. T. O'CONOR SLOANE, Ph.D.; *Associate Editor*

WILBUR C. WHITEHEAD, *Literary Editor*

C. A. BRANDT, *Literary Editor*

Editorial and General Offices: 230 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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*Extravagant Fiction Today*

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*Cold Fact Tomorrow*

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# *The ETHER SHIP of OLTOR*

*By S. Maxwell Coder*



## FIRST HONORABLE MENTION IN THE \$500 PRIZE COVER CONTEST

Awarded to S. Maxwell Coder, 6926 Paschall Avenue, Philadelphia, Penna., for "The Ether Ship of Oltor."

# THE ETHER SHIP OF OLTOR

By S. MAXWELL CODER

New York Bulletin, November 16, 2034:

The earth will shortly witness, and may even take part in, a most astounding astronomical phenomenon now in the making, says Professor Albert Dunhill, of the observatory at Stone Mountain, Vermont. According to calculations made by him, and independently by Zondersteits, of Berlin, a wandering star and its satellites will pass through the solar system in a year hence. It is calculated whether the gravitational force of the sun will have the effect of so deflecting the group from its erratic course as to destroy the equilibrium existing between the members of the solar system. If this should happen, chaos is considered inevitable, but the chances are overwhelmingly against such an eventuality.

Albany Ledger, December 2, 2034:

Aaron Steiner, a produce raiser near Middleburg, declared today that his studies in the Bible have revealed a prophecy to the effect that the end of the world is due to arrive next year in December. He believes the crushing celestial bodies recently discovered moving toward the sun will cause the earth to burn up, fulfilling the ancient prediction of the Hebrew soothsayers.

New York Bulletin, November 26, 2035:

Earth's End Certain, Says Swedish Scientist—No Noticeable Effect Here, Other Astronomers State

So great has been the change in the course of the wandering planetary system which was discovered moving in the general direction of the earth last fall that it is practically impossible for it to leave again without completely disrupting the whole solar system. According to the calculations of the noted observer at the University of Stockholm, he believes that the two suns will rush together, and that the earth will be destroyed.

However, other scientists, both here and abroad, are of the opinion that although there may be temporary changes in the orbits of the outermost planets, no great effect will be felt on our globe.

Bulletin, January 7, 2036:

On the eve of what promises to be the most stupendous celestial event the world has ever known, scientific circles are still in suspense over the question whether the course of the sun or of the earth will be affected. The theory that chaos will result has been definitely abandoned, but there are some men of science who think the earth may be thrown so far from its course that it will receive insufficient heat from the sun to maintain human life in its present state. The height of whatever disturbance there may be will be reached in the middle of February. The exact date cannot be foretold.

From "A History of the Cataclysm":

During all of that perilous time ending in February, 2036, an atmosphere of indescribable gloom and fear hung over the entire earth. The arguments of the learned ones concerning the possibility of our world being blotted out; the strange appearance of the sky at night; the unusual climatic conditions, aroused unreasoning panic in the populace. Religious fanatics, with their reiterations of the prophecies of doom, their dogma of an all-pervading evil spirit holding sway over the whole world, aroused drowsy communities to frenzied activity. High priests among the people went religion-mad. This feeling led to unbearable demonstrations of intolerance and persecution. Those intellectual persons who had previously begun to hope that the human race had

at last broken the fetters of medieval mental bondage, despaired of finding even alleviating freedom of thought.

As the fatal night of the catastrophe approached, the situation became alarming. Suicides were frequent, and many acts of insanity; while due to the unparalleled warmth in the air, with a superabundance of moisture, pestilence broke out. The green death spread to the four corners of the earth. Within a week of the start of the catastrophe, thousands were sickened... On the day of the impending calamity, however, a solid line of residents of the rural communities to seek the multitudes already congregated in the cities. Excitement reached a feverish pitch. When evening approached, a roar could be heard issuing from the masses, thunderous like a million roar which rolled over the neighborhood, like the kind of death.

Then, as darkness settled down, a strange silence came over the cities. There was no sound of traffic, no tumult of voices. Here and there a hysterical woman sobbed or someone prayed, making more acute the oppressive quiet. Everyone waited, staring at the heavens, where nothing was as usual. The sky was suffused with lurid colors; the moon came out of her altered position; the bright misty blotch marking the oncoming celestial wanderer had become vastly larger than on the preceding night. The stars shone but dimly in comparison, while the lurid radiance cast on the earth by the new sun made the night take on a ghastly hue.

Eleven o'clock passed; twelve o'clock. As the half hour struck, there came the first signs that the crisis was at hand. Showers of meteorites suddenly flashed across the sky, dazzling in their brilliancy. While they rained in from the outer spaces, a tremor shot through the ground. A sickening feeling came over everyone that the earth was no longer secure. The moon came out of her altered position; the bright misty blotch marking the oncoming celestial wanderer had become vastly larger than on the preceding night. The stars shone but dimly in comparison, while the lurid radiance cast on the earth by the new sun made the night take on a ghastly hue.

At noon the sun burst loose. The most horrifying sights were to be seen by any human eye beheld. Amid the cries of the populace as it rushed madly from place to place could be heard the shrieks of the weak, trampled under foot. As the swaying ground began to topple huge buildings, an enormous tidal wave came in from the ocean, belching it.

Frantic messages, in other parts of the world, told of the sea receding from the shore, exposing the floor of the ocean as far as the eye could reach; of hurricanes in progress; of daylight turning into darkness.

Just as world-wide spread by the observatories that the worst was over, and the collision of suns had been providentially averted, there came a red ball through the sky directly toward the earth. Another sickening shudder of the ground, and then all was still, while looming large overhead appeared a new world.

Clipping from the combined New York papers, March 6, 2036:

Reports from the observatories state that the new planet visible in the heavens is not Mars thrown out of its orbit, as was first supposed, but a member of the system which came so near to destroying the earth. The solar system has lost its outermost planet, Neptune, to the attraction of the wandering sun, and has in turn captured Neone, as our new neighbor has been named.

It is an interesting question whether life exists on Neone. Its atmosphere and temperature are similar to those of the earth, but no signs of vegetation or habitation have been discovered. The red color is largely continuous, except at several regions of light blue believed to be seas. No further recovery of the peoples of the earth from the effects of the catastrophe, efforts at wireless communication will be made.

WO men stood at the rail of the liner *Empress of Ceylon* late one afternoon, watching the rise of Neone. A beautiful deep crimson, it left the purple sea in the east and slowly climbed through the heavens. With a number of their

ON awarding the First Honorable Mention in our \$500.00 prize contest, we selected this story principally because it is a very clever interplanetary type of story, that somehow reads quite differently from the usual run of such stories. The science in this story is excellent, and the whole treatment somehow reads exceedingly plausibly. There is an abundant amount of adventure contained in it. Particular attention is called to the excellent science throughout the story, and we are certain that you will enjoy an interesting twenty-five minutes of entertainment in perusing this fine story.

fellow passengers, they were absorbed in the sight, when suddenly one of them cried out:

"Say, Bob, what in the world is that thing, out there? Looks like a balloon."

He pointed to a silvery ball, until then unnoticed by anyone, above the sea toward the south. It

moved through the air in the direction of the ship, at a distance of several miles. Forgetting the still novel sight of the new planet, the men moved to a more advantageous position and watched the oncoming object with increasing surprise.

"Well, it certainly is novel construction for aircraft, Frank." Professor Robert Staunton looked puzzled. "Do you notice the absence of the usual exhaust hum? And the fixity of its angle to the horizon, its unwavering path, suggest gyroscopic control of some sort. If it keeps its present course, it should pass directly overhead."

The odd looking airship, if such it could be called, rapidly neared the liner, permitting closer observation of its peculiarities. It was a gigantic sphere, some 600 feet in diameter, made of a silver-white metal, except for two projecting caps at opposite ends of a diagonal axis, and a sort of semi-cylindrical ring encircling it, midway between the caps. Long rods projected from depressions spaced evenly around the red band. The caps and ring were composed of red metal, polished like the rest. The strangest thing about the sphere, however, was the presence of two blue-green balls of fire hanging suspended by faintly luminous cords from the centers of the caps.

As it approached the ship, its speed decreased, and on getting directly overhead, it stopped and slowly descended. Here a singular thing happened. Every eye had been on the globe, and the people on the deck had begun to retreat from the menace of the hanging balls of fire, now dangerously near them, when a shout came from the watch:

"The sea is rising!"

A glance over the rail more than verified his startled announcement. *The ship was on the top of a slowly growing hill of water!* To a distance of several hundred feet, the water gradually fell away on a steep incline, while beyond, could be seen the disturbed surface of what had been a placid and level sea a few minutes before. Frank Robinson, the nearer of the two friends to the forward end of the upper deck, came to a surprising conclusion.

"It's those mysterious fire balls, Bob! They must possess a powerful attractive force. Look at the chairs and things flying into them!"

From both ends of the ship, loose objects moved upward to the luminous masses as iron is drawn to a suspended magnet. Free ropes stood straight up in the air, and a lifeboat had turned upside down in its davits, where it strained at its fastenings. The passengers, thoroughly frightened, began to feel the pull on themselves. They huddled together as near to the center of the boat as they could get, or went below in terror. A strong wind had sprung up, singing through the wires, masts and stanchions as it, too, rushed toward the center of attraction. Great waves, carried by the sudden blast, came in from the surrounding ocean, climbed the slope and broke against the sides of the vessel, throwing great showers of spray upward. The spray, instead of covering the decks, kept right on going upwards until it vanished in the flame—cold flame, for no heat was perceptible.

At the captain's orders, shots were fired, but they only served to make the women more frightened.

Staunton went below and procured his automatic from the cabin, and when he returned, he informed his companion that the engines were stalled, the lights had gone out, and all clocks and watches refused to function. "Apparently," he said, "every electrical and mechanical device on the boat has been made inactive. There is nothing wrong with the generators as far as the chief engineer can discover, and he believes the engines have only stopped because the ignition current is in some manner short-circuited. All the storage batteries have become hot, through rapid exhaustion, although they have not been in use."

With an accuracy born of long practice, he placed his shots carefully on what appeared to be the weakest points in the terrifying shape above them, but as the lowermost part of the sphere was three hundred feet overhead, not much could be seen as to the effect of the bullets.

The hill of water had now become a veritable mountain. The first mate, who had been peering intently sidewise at the point where the sea reached its normal level, announced his belief that the whole thing was in motion.

"Look at that, fellows," he said excitedly, "if this water pile isn't moving at a lively clip, then I'm no seaman!"

**H**E had hardly finished speaking, when land showed at the horizon. It rapidly enlarged, and in a few minutes, the precipitous sides of Hendrick's Island, once a bird refuge, came into view. On toward it the liner was carried, until, near the beach below the cliffs, it stopped moving. The fire balls decreased in size, the water subsided and the *Empress of Ceylon* grounded in twenty-five feet of water.

The captain bellowed an oath, as the sphere moved on ahead over the island, leaving him stranded. He ordered the engines started, and no difficulty was experienced, but it was obviously useless to attempt to get free without aid. The sphere settled low above the cliff, hanging motionless. As those on the vessel watched, a door in the red ring silently opened downward, forming a platform, to which a man stepped. In the semi-darkness, he could not be seen clearly, but he seemed to be dressed in red, with a strange looking headgear. Quiet suddenly came over the noisy, excited people on the captive vessel, the silence of expectancy. Everyone looked upward. The man on the platform stood motionless with arms outstretched. To the amazement of the listening groups, he spoke no word.

Robert Staunton turned to his friend. With a catch in his voice, as if he were suppressing strong emotion, he said:

"Frank, are you thinking about Neone, and gold, and have you an idea that that man will take us back to deep water if we give him all we have? I'm not joking!"

Astonished, his friend looked at him. "Why yes! Those thoughts of mine—how did you know? What does it mean? And listen—several are speaking of the same subject." A low murmur of discussion had begun to run through the crowd.

Staunton grasped his friend's arm. "Do you remember the days when we fellows used to experiment with mental telepathy? For some reason, I have always taken the thing pretty seriously, and I often have felt that I knew what was going on in another person's mind, without always a conscious effort at reception. *I believe that man is from Neone, and is attempting to communicate with us by thought waves!* Come with me to the captain!"

They hurried to the bridge, where the ship's officers were discussing the situation. Staunton stated his belief, which was received with incredulity by all but one of them, who admitted having, rather subconsciously, thoughts on the same subject. Staunton then called six men at random from among the passengers, and on demonstrating that four of them had even discussed, half seriously, the possibility of the people in the sphere being from Neone, with intentions of stealing valuables from the liner, he commanded respect for his opinion.

"When a scientific man like him says it, there must be somethin' in it," a second class traveller offered.

Unwillingly, the captain allowed himself to be persuaded to get a quantity of gold from the safe, where a shipment of bullion was stored. Staunton had now assumed command of the situation.

"The man up there says he has made me his officer, and he is concentrating his thoughts on me. He wants all the gold in the ship placed on the bridge, and everyone is to retire from it."

The captain permitted a small portion only of the bullion to be used as Staunton directed, but he left the bridge readily enough, anticipating the triumph of his loudly voiced doubts.

For a moment, nothing happened. Then another door in the machine opened, and a long, snake-like rod descended and moved out to the ship. When the pyramidal end was immediately over the gold, it became faintly luminescent. The gold was gently lifted, and the rod moved back into the open door, which closed behind it. Everyone gasped.

The man disappeared from the platform for a moment, only to return and stand motionless again.

"That fool captain will destroy us all," Robinson heard his friend mutter. Staunton climbed to the bridge, and addressed the assemblage below.

"Listen to me! The man you see up there says he has indicators which tell him we have still a larger quantity of gold on board. He wants it all, every bit of it, and unless we comply with his request, he will cause the liner to be dashed up against the cliff. We have all seen that he has us entirely in his power, and it is useless to resist. The captain is right in trying to protect his owners' interests, but if everybody on board will sign a statement absolving him from blame, I'm sure he will do whatever he can to save the liner and the lives of everyone on board. I tell you, the situation is desperate! The creature in the globe is growing impatient, and this is the last thing he has to say."

THE captain, who knew when he was up against it, gave orders that the entire shipment of gold be placed on the bridge. Again the slender arm

came from the sphere, picked up the heavy boxes and conveyed them upward.

Soon after, the strange looking machine moved out over the liner, the fiery masses brightened and increased in size, the water rose, and the liner floated free. It was conveyed to deeper water, after which its captor moved away and vanished over the horizon. Staunton took his friend aside.

"Frank, we are going to witness some of the strangest things anyone has ever seen, tonight. This affair is not ended, as far as you and I are concerned. That chap in the sphere told me a whole lot of things I did not see fit to pass on to the rest, and I gave a mental promise to visit him later this evening, after darkness had settled down completely. Are you game to come with me, to risk putting yourself completely in the power of the people who stole our gold? I assure you, they are more human than they seemed."

"Bob, you know better than to ask such a question. Has either of us ever balked where there was an adventure to be had? We have been in some pretty tight situations together, old man, and I'm with you any old time. Why the air of excitement? This thing must be more promising than you have led me to believe. What all do you know?"

"Except for the clear statement to the effect that they are from Neone, I know little. I gathered that gold is used for fuel in the machine, and that their supply is low, but I can't swear to the accuracy of my reception of either thought. Got anything below you want to take with you? We leave in half an hour."

Without vouchsafing any more information to his friend, Staunton led the way to their staterooms.

Shortly after dark, they stood at the rail at the stern of the liner, peering into the distance. Just what they expected to see, probably neither of them could have said, but certainly they were both surprised at what did appear.

Silently, except for a faint high-toned hum, two glittering metal conveyances, so irregular in form as to defy description, flew over the water from out of the darkness to the stern of the boat. Each was operated by a man, indistinctly outlined, seated on one of two seats at the centers of the devices, behind transparent shields. The machines stopped in midair, just outside the rail. Understanding what was expected, the two waiting men climbed from the deck into the seats alongside the shadowy figures.

Immediately the figures moved rods, and the tiny vessels of the air flew away in the direction the globe had gone earlier in the evening. Not a word did the pilots utter, but their passengers, through the medium of powerful unbidden thoughts, were apprized that they need have no fear, and that the trip would be of short duration. Indeed, they had hardly started, it seemed, when the glow of the cord ends of the giant ball marked the nearness of their destination. Both felt that they had travelled with incredible speed, knowing as they did that they must have gone several miles in that brief interval. A door was open in the red ring when they arrived, and the machines flew through, coming to a gentle stop on the floor within.

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Finding themselves inside the sphere, the two friends clambered from their seats and looked about them. They were in a dimly lighted room, made of the same metal that formed the outside of the ring. As they turned to look at their guides, they gasped in astonishment. Revealed clearly for the first time, the pilots of the machines were seen to be absolutely naked, their skins of a bright red, approaching vermillion. At least six feet in height, they were splendidly formed, but they had one distinguishing feature which marked them unmistakably as beings from another world. A membranous blue-gray, wing-like substance grew from their upper extremities. From the forehead, where it was over a foot in width, it extended down the neck on either side, over the shoulders and along the arms. It decreased gradually in width as it approached the middle of the forearms, where it ended. The presence of this alar appendage, and the entire absence of ears, were the only visible differences between these people and human beings. Eyebrows and lashes they had, but no hair grew on their heads in back of the membranous webs, which were attached from the forehead to the mid-dle of the cranium.

THE guides led the way up a metal stair, and through a long passage at the top, to a large room where several of the odd looking red men sat or reclined on couches of fine fur. One of them arose as the newcomers entered, and they sensed that he was the leader. He radiated power and strength of mind. By thought, he informed them that he was Oltor, inventor of the machine and chief of the party. Cognizant of their wonder at the appearance of his people, and of the multitude of questions running through their minds, he led his guests to a couch and conveyed to them the information they desired, although it was evident that he was waiting anxiously to question them as well.

"As you know, we are from Astarak, the blood-red planet captured by your sun during the recent collision of solar systems. We have come to your land Unuat on a voyage of discovery. Unexpected difficulties in interplanetary space caused such a great waste of our fuel, the metal I took this evening from your vessel, that our supply was almost exhausted when we chanced to come upon your conveyance with a quantity on board. Because of our urgent need for it, I was forced to use severe measures to secure all you had, which I trust has not given the impression to you that I would actually have carried out the threats I made. You see, one more day would have seen the end of my space annihilator, without fuel. It would have settled to the ground, and we would have been marooned here forever. In such a time of necessity, one must use whatever methods will serve, regardless of one's inclination.

"The fibrous webs which interest you so much are prolongations of our brain substance, for the purpose of thought reception and selection, and the propagation and directing of thought impulses from our brains. For short distances they are not neces-

sary, but when we desire to converse with someone far away, they serve the purpose of intensifying out-going waves and of detecting faint vibrations from afar. But how do you communicate ideas? What are the formations on the sides of your heads? Why do you wear a covering?"

Staunton explained that thought transference was as yet only a freak phenomenon on the earth; that speech and writing were the methods of intercourse. He demonstrated articulate speech, and gave all the information that occurred to him. The Astarakians, incapable of hearing, were likewise incapable of speaking. Oltor, possessed of a wonderfully acute tactile sense, as were all of his race, felt the vibrations in the air when Staunton talked, and expressed surprise at what was to him a new and remarkable thing. Following many explanations, they were shown through the machine.

The lighting system consisted of transparent tubes, containing a fine crystalline substance aglow with phosphorescent fire. Their guide told them that a continuous reversible chemical reaction went on in the tubes, producing cold light in the same manner certain lower forms of life produced it in specialized organs.

For motive and attractive power, a complicated system was shown the men that they did not quite understand, in spite of the pains to which Oltor went to make it clear. Each of the cabins of the "strain ring," as the red band around the middle of the sphere was called, was equipped with an engine of the sub-atomic centripetal type common on Neone, the ideal toward which world scientists had been directing their energies for over a hundred years. The atomic disintegration of gold was somehow accomplished in the engines, furnishing energy, in an amount incredible in its magnitude, to an inner globe of strange composition, which was kept in continuous rotation around the red metal axis of the machine. The exact nature of the motive power was possibly the most inexplicable part of the apparatus: Rotation of the inner ball caused a state of terrific strain in the ether at the region of the ring. At this point in the explanation, Staunton turned to his friend.

"Remember Einstein's theories? *Gravitational force is nothing more than a state of strain in the ether, the result of an immense concentration of mass.* I wonder if the earth's rotation hasn't got something to do with it as well?"

Because of the strain produced by the ball, a flow of vibratory energy from the universe came in through the receptors depending from the axis caps, and was dissipated along certain designated radial propelling rods which projected from concave depressions of insulating material in the center of each cabin. The reaction set up by the energy radiated by the rods caused motion of the sphere in the opposite direction, so that if the rods on only one side were activated, the machine moved away, while if all were turned on, the opposing reactions prevented movement and it stood still. Gravitational force was overcome in the same way. Rotation of the entire sphere about a vertical axis permitted movement in any direction.

In the main control room, Oltor demonstrated the method of operation of the machine. One controlling device regulated the speed of the centripetal engines; others governed the direction in which the universal energy was returned to the ether by selecting certain of the propelling shafts and inactivating others; a sort of neutralizing screen could be placed in the way of an internal energy flow, causing the generation of immense quantities of heat for use in interplanetary space; levers put into motion mechanism that opened doors and caused flexible procuring rods to dart forth, like the one which had been used to secure the gold.

It was in the control room that the men first closely observed the heavy silver-white metal used in constructing most of the equipment.

"Say, Frank, I believe this is an alloy of platinum!" Staunton, with difficulty, was lifting a stool.

"Platinum? This whole works made of our rarest metal? If that's so, why do they make such a fuss over a few pounds of gold?"

"Why are you so excited over that metal?" Oltor inquired.

"With two exceptions, it is the most highly prized and the rarest metal to be found on our earth, worth more, by far, than the yellow substance you use for fuel. If you wish to make restitution for having forcibly removed gold from the ship, return to them half the weight of this, and they will be more than pleased with the bargain."

OLTOR gazed out of a transparent door at the sky, then moved a few levers and overhauled the liner, ploughing its way along through the sea in the darkness. As the deck became crowded, he lowered a few small articles and several chairs to the bridge, then Staunton descended, after promising to return with his and his friend's belongings, for an extended visit in the capacity of interpreters of the phenomena to be observed on the surface of the earth. The captain of the ship rather dubiously accepted the tools and chairs, but regained his humor when told by a man of the undoubted standing of the scientist that they were of platinum.

During the next few weeks, as agents for Oltor, the men purchased, in addition to a quantity of gold, which was a rare metal on Arastak, or Neone, certain representative books, pictures, machines and other things calculated to inform his people of life on the land of Unuat, as the earth was known to them.

The ship of space visited only one city, for hardly had they neared it when its telephonic and lighting systems were rendered inactive, due to the rush of energy from all around to the receptors. Thereafter, Staunton and Robinson took turns making their way by land to the civic centers. Oltor and his companions never descended. They refused to wear clothing, and they were advised against mingling with humans without it.

The collection of earth-made things was at last considered large enough, and the furnishings of the sphere were becoming scarce. Oltor had been testing various metals procured for him, and he seemed excited when, in replying to a query about steel,

Robinson told him that the metal was so plentiful that nearly all building frameworks, ocean going vessels, and machinery were made from it. Then, when Esma, second in command, suggested the acquisition of a liner similar to the one captured in the sphere's search for gold, to house the things to be taken from the earth, Oltor acquiesced with a celerity that indicated an ulterior motive in his desire to possess one, but he offered no explanation.

With some trouble, the *Femorus* was purchased, at an exorbitant price, considering the fact that since the cataclysm, ocean voyages were seldom taken. The vessel was left several miles out at sea by its crew, who departed in tugs, watching in amazement while it was towed away by the sphere. It was taken to the rocky island where the other purchases had been left, and it was speedily loaded, after which Oltor pressed his new-found friends to visit Astarak as his guests.

"How will we get back?"

The red man laughed. "Don't worry. I do not intend adding you to my collection of curiosities. I think, since my space annihilator has proved to be such a success on this trip, that I shall take another expedition to the planet you call Venus, in half a year or so. You may return then. If you really must come sooner, I will gladly bring you."

They surprised him by their eagerness to go with him. Having no fetters in the way of families or affairs, and being of an adventurous turn of mind, they had been hoping for the opportunity.

So it was, that five weeks after they had first seen the apparition in the sky, the men left the earth for a strange planet. The first human beings ever to start on such an epochal trip, they felt an overpowering sense of loneliness as the landscape below them rapidly fell away. The great ocean liner, held by the mysterious affinity of matter for the energy-absorbing receptors, swung twenty feet or more below the lower part of the luminous balls that always surrounded them.

Oltor moved the controlling levers farther, and the sphere simply catapulted upward. Gradually, he shut off the propelling rods on the side toward his home planet, letting more and more of the etheric strain energy be dissipated in the direction of the earth, giving a high uniform acceleration to the space ship.

"For over a day, you will find it necessary to stand on the side of the cabin toward the earth, to keep upright. The acceleration of the cabin acts exactly as an unusually great gravitational force. As we near top speed, be careful not to make any sudden movements. The velocity will soon be constant, and you will become without appreciable weight."

Earth's attraction had become negligible long before. As acceleration decreased, the men felt themselves becoming lighter on their feet, and the lightest touch of a finger on the wall sent them across the room. Walking was out of the question. As Staunton expressed it, they were literally in the "interstellar laboratory" Einstein had described early in the twentieth century.

Although the temperature outside the sphere approached absolute zero, and the machine moved in a

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perfect vacuum, the heat and oxygen producing devices kept the cabins as suitable to live in as any closed room could be. The doors and walls were air tight and nearly perfectly insulated against heat radiation.

As they looked down on the vanishing world, the adventurous pair saw what had been clearly defined continents gradually blend with the oceans, until at several hundred thousand miles distance, there was nothing visible except a brightly mottled sphere, hanging in space. As the moon passed near, their pilot had to make an adjustment of the propellant rods to compensate for its gravity. The moon's glaring and pitted surface passed and shrank into smallness with fearful rapidity.

The distance between Astarak and the earth at the time of the journey was approximately 18,000,-00 miles, and the ether ship made the trip in a trifle over five mean solar days, as they are known on the earth. This meant an average speed of 2,500 miles per minute!

OLTOR began deceleration at the end of the fourth day, as Astarak loomed big ahead, less than three million miles away. Rotation of the cabin ring, placing the gyroscopic mass of the sphere between the main cabins and the planet, nearly neutralized gravitational pull on the group within, but the inertia of their bodies gave a strong gravitational effect, while motion was slowly decreased, and the men found it advisable to lie down on the side of the cabin toward Astarak. Standing gave the sensation of the carrying of a great weight.

It was with keen interest that they at last saw the surface of the strange world rise toward them. Dry, it appeared, not a cloud marring the clearness of its atmosphere. At first sight, it looked extremely barren and rocky, in comparison with the fertile earth, but as the sphere dropped further down, lakes and rivers became visible, and one small ocean.

"The erosion that has taken place here is remarkable. How old would you say Astarak is, Bob?"

"I'm no geologist, but it certainly must be at least two million years older than the earth. These crags and furrows probably were once plateaus and plains, but since Oltor says the quality of the ground is so much different from that of the earth that there is no similarity whatever, we cannot tell how much faster or slower the water cut it down."

Oltor moved rapidly over the jutting mountains toward his city. Here and there could be observed patches of vegetation; several times what looked like slinking animals were seen; and twice the ship of space passed near collections of odd looking structures called cities by the red people.

"We now approach the largest group of habitations on the planet, where my wife and friends await me," came the thoughts of Oltor. "All the circular structures you see are the upper parts of the houses of my race. They are cylindrical in shape for the same reason your people build homes in the form of a rectangle—ease of construction and, to a certain extent, convention. We live in the tops of them, and an inferior race of slaves is per-

mited to occupy the lower rooms. The entrances, you observe, are below the living quarters, and open into rooms where are kept flight machines and food, letting light enter unimpeded from all sides of the top rooms. The lowest entrances are those of the slaves, who use artificial illumination altogether. Streets, a necessity on your planet, have not been in existence here for thousands of years. They lost their usefulness at the start of the age of flight, which came with the discovery of atomic disintegration. All transportation and travel have been by means of sub-atomic engine-driven conveyances since that momentous discovery, and the elevated streets connecting mountain tops to each other, which history tells us of, have long since vanished."

They had now reached a deep chasm, in the midst of hundreds of buildings. Oltor called attention to a small group of people on a pinnacle of rock, one of whom was waving his arms in token of greeting.

"They are my family and a few friends, who know of my coming. See, there are my wife and son, with their webs erected in anticipation of my leaving the ship. I do not wonder that they are eager for news. They will be unable to learn anything until we open a door, for the metal of the walls is impervious to thought waves."

Oltor turned the controls over to another member of the party, and a door was opened outward and downward from the cabin, forming a platform to which the trio stepped. Spellbound, the earth men stood looking at the view spread out now in its entirety. Below them was a vast rocky valley, completely surrounded by beetling cliffs. Two torrents of water rushed down from opposite walls, and formed a madly tossing whirlpool in the depths of the gap, from whence issued a deep and sullen roar. Far above, on the tops of the rocks, innumerable cylindrical dwellings precariously reared themselves—pillared structures, on slender towers. The group of red creatures was the only sign of life in the otherwise desolate city. They occupied one of the most inaccessible spires of moss covered rock. When the door opened in the sphere, the assembled beings snapped their webs into the position of attention, and the men felt the emotions from below, of love, anxiety, and wonder at the great liner hanging from the receptors. Oltor and several others of the crew flew down to the group, and later his guests joined them.

Greetings, explanations, and the pawing-over of the newcomers finally sufficing for the time being, they reascended and conveyed the "museum," as the vessel purchased was apparently intended to be, to a lake without the city, where it was floated. The space annihilator was put in the care of a crew taken aboard for the purpose of overhauling its engines and machinery.

"Now, my friends, here are two individual sub-atomic propulsion machines taken from the stores of the sphere, and they are yours,"—Oltor demonstrated them. "You will find the control easy."

The contrivances consisted of a shielded seat, surmounting a tiny complexity of metal, with a platinum rod projecting upward for control of speed and direction. Quietly they ran, but created

a great disturbance in the air below and in back of them.

"What makes them go, Bob, any idea?"

"I gather that repulsion of air is the source of their movement, but whether it is through projected electrons or charged and repelled air molecules, I frankly don't know. The fundamentals on which they are constructed, I find rather beyond my grasp."

After some difficulty in mastering the operation, they flew back to the city. It was several days before it seemed natural, moving about the country through the air in machines no larger than themselves.

The ensuing days brought much of adventure and excitement to the two. Oltor took them on hunting and fishing trips, after the horrible looking monsters living in caves and crevices along the rivers, and creatures, resembling pterodactyls, which spread their twenty-foot wings over the fastnesses of the mountains. Gigantic bats, considered delicacies for the quality of their meat, the men hunted but once. The bats only ventured forth from their hidden retreats late at night, and no moon alleviated the darkness of that world. It was not pleasant to be abroad among winged monsters which were attracted by lights carried by the hunters, and they were content to forego the thrill thereafter.

ONE pastime frequently indulged in was that of exploring the vast underground waters. Nearly all the rivers of that remarkable planet entered great caves in the sides of the mountains, and formed, far within, subterranean lakes, where abound creatures of sufficient size and ferocity to satisfy the bravest adventurer.

One day Oltor led the way into a cavernous hole where a river flowed its silent way, cautioning his friends to keep as near to the roof as possible, to avoid the tentacles of a sort of serpent that had an unpleasant habit of reaching for bats in the crevices of the walls, while it swam blindly along in the darkness. They came at length to a distant lake, the farther shore of which was invisible in the light of the bulbs carried at their sides. Two surface snakes were sighted simultaneously, toothed reptiles that subsisted by catching small water creatures venturing too far from their crevices in the shore. Robinson pricked one with a spear, and when it made off across the lake, Oltor went with him in pursuit of it, leaving Staunton to the smaller of the monsters. He prodded his victim into a rage, but after snapping its jaws in an effort to crush its tormentor, it turned and fled. Staunton chased it around the shore, forgetting caution in his excitement. Ahead of him, in the rock above the water, a black hole gaped, unobserved. As he flew forward in a quick effort to corner the escaping serpent, he passed within a few feet of the opening in the wall. So suddenly that he was completely bewildered, a clammy hand wrapped itself around his arm and he was jerked into the cave.

Far over the lake, Oltor and Robinson heard a scream; saw the lighted area which had marked their friend's whereabouts vanish.

"Good lord, Oltor, something's got Staunton!"

"Hurry! He may have been drawn under the water!" came the reply from the red man, already speeding for the spot.

Within the cave, Staunton struggled for his life. Temporarily blinded by something twined around his head, he slashed at a tangle of hairy, wet arms encircling him. Freeing his vision, he looked. He was being drawn toward the foul mouth of a horrible giant water spider. Feeling his strength failing, he shouted for help, just as his last light bulb was crushed, the phosphorescent powder dying out on the wet floor.

Then, as he felt the nearness of the hairy body, a blue ray shot over him, from the entrance to the cave, full into that awful head. He felt the arms grow limp, and in a moment Oltor stood at his side, holding in his hand a thin tube he had habitually carried on their excursions underground. As they left for the upper regions, with more than their fill of excitement for the day, Oltor explained.

"This tube constitutes one of the main protective weapons of my race. For centuries we have used it. When an intense thought pulse, of a specific nature, is directed on the tube, a ray emits, which has the power of short circuiting the mental impulses of the nervous system. Incidentally, you may have a chance of seeing some of our weapons in use, if what I learned today is true."

"What, you expect a war? Whom with?"

"I will tell you this evening, after a messenger has made his report. I sincerely hope there is nothing to the story."

Back in the city, an air of excitement prevailed. Numbers of men were flying back and forth from one meeting to another. After Oltor returned from a conference with the leaders of the red race, he appeared grave. Calling his friends aside, he conveyed to them the trouble.

"As you have seen, this is an old planet, incapable of producing the quantities of food you are accustomed to seeing on Unuat. In the past, there have been several wars here, wars of self-preservation. The most recent one was at the time my race conquered the Ektars, who live now in the lower rooms of our towers, satisfied with slavery to us. I have never told you of that war. The Ektars, or dwarfs, originally lived beyond the chain of seas to the east, in a region where there once had been a superabundance of food. Not controlling the number of their children born, as our environment compels us to do, they multiplied so rapidly that our people began to suffer from lack of food. Since it was a question of survival, and any moral consideration must give way to the perpetuation of the race, my ancestors, though far fewer in number, entered the region and killed a sufficient number to restore the balance of life existing between men and food animals. Because the same thing had happened many years before, it was decided that the only satisfactory method of procedure was to enslave them, and they have been in that condition ever since. We have humane methods of controlling their numbers."

"Including the Royas in the south, there are probably not more than two million people to be

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found on the whole planet. It is the Royas who are causing the present stir in the city. They are now advanced far enough to question our supremacy, and any day may see the beginning of a war to determine which race shall people Astarak in the future. The brown race of Royas have always kept very much to themselves. Little is known concerning their culture or their inventions and discoveries, but I fear, if observers have not been mistaken in what they claim to have seen, that the race is possessed of a destructive ray against which we have no defense. If that is true, and there should really be a war, we will have to depend on offensive measures to end it. I am sure we have weapons little dreamed of by the Royas."

Staunton had several times spoken to his friend about Oltor's reticence concerning certain machines and queer looking contrivances they had seen at various places in the cities, and Robinson suggested the probable solution.

"Our minds are so notoriously easily read, that an unseen enemy would experience no difficulty in discovering any secrets we might possess."

"I feel like a child among these people. Things they have known for centuries, we cannot even begin to understand. Yet, their intelligence, *per se*, is not so remarkable. A mental problem, I have noticed, is no more readily solved by the best of them, than by either of us. It would seem to prove that in the evolution of a race, mental power does not change much. Mental webs have been evolved here, but I doubt if their reasoning powers have increased at the same time. These people have a vast accumulation of knowledge, which gives them the edge on us. If an earth child were brought up here, his education beginning at the advanced stage of that of the young ones of Oltor's race, he would have no more trouble than they, in grasping what are to us intricate principles."

ONLY a few days after the conferences, Oltor aroused his visitors from sleep, sometime in the night.

"Come quickly, my friends, we are attacked—the Royas! We must reach the space ship before they can come between it and the city. Hurry! You cannot stop to put those fool clothes on!"

He rushed them down to the machines. Naked, like their guide, they sped through the night. As they passed over the city, they saw moving shadows within many of the dimly outlined windows. The entire city was awake, a thing to them unprecedented, for night was not a pleasant thing among those black crags and pits. It was the custom to go to bed early, after a short evening spent at mental games and "conversation."

Oltor, in the lead, sent back messages to his companions. Indicating a slowly moving, egg-shaped thing:

"That black form, scarcely visible in the starlight, is a fighting machine which has destroyed a group of houses at the outskirts of the city. They passed over, and the houses crumbled beneath them, no one knows by what kind of destructive ray. One occupant escaped death, and has aroused the city.

A swath of death and ruin is being left in the path of that airship, though most of the people are now making for the upper spaces. It is high time the city's defenders were in their towers."

They had now reached a point where another airship was discernible, rapidly moving in the direction of the space annihilator, the faint glow of which could be seen at the pinnacle above which it was kept.

"We are too late to reach the space ship, and we will have to trust that the crew will discover their peril in time. Come this way!"

Oltor took them to one of the highest towers in the city. It was deserted. A red man turned away as he saw the group entering, and raced to a nearby tower. Oltor went to a long tube projecting from an opening in the wall, threw a switch and a red ray pierced the gloom. Almost at the same time, other beams of red, and several of blue, sprang from different places in the night, and all concentrated on the nearest airship.

"Wow! Feel the heat radiating from the front end of that tube, Bob? And look at the airship!"

When the first beam had touched the enemy ship, it had turned and attempted to escape, but before moving far, it changed in color from black to cherry red, becoming steadily brighter, as slowly, then with increasing velocity, it dropped into the canyon. As it started to fall, the red rays left it and sought the other one. Apparently the operators of the remaining vessel had discovered the plight of their fellows, for they made off rapidly, followed by a searchlight from the distant space ship, the occupants of which had got into action too late to take part in the battle.

The disabled airship landed with a crash on the bank of the river, above the falls. As it struck the water, a cloud of steam and a loud hissing issued from the valley.

Oltor answered the unspoken questions of the startled spectators of the midnight battle.

"Within this tube, heat waves are generated and concentrated, and red light waves are permitted to emit with them, to permit easy direction of the beam. We heated that ship to near incandescence, but the one which escaped carried sufficient information away to make this method of defence worth little in the future. It is rather easy to insulate against the heat rays, and the Royas will never be caught again as they were to-night. In fact, I am inclined to think they sent only two ships in order to find just what defences we have against them. I expected to see dozens in their attack."

Awed, Staunton and his friend followed Oltor to the area of devastated homes. They were much surprised to see, in the light sent from nearby towers, that where there had formerly been dome shaped dwellings, nothing remained but piles of stone dust! For nearly fifteen feet from what had been the roofs of the destroyed buildings, the stone of which they were made had in some manner been crumpled. Of the occupants, nothing tangible remained.

"They have a terrible weapon, Oltor."

"Yes, I have heard of its action before, and know of no method of overcoming it. It is some

kind of invisible radiation which causes intermolecular strains of such a magnitude that cohesion is overcome and solid matter disintegrates. Several months ago, two of our airships were seen to melt away as they approached the region of the Royas. Later, my agents found several small pieces of the metal you call steel below where the ships were attacked. They were the only parts of the ship structure to escape at least partial destruction. Here, in these ruins, I find several fragments of the same metal, untouched, though the machines of which they formed a part are otherwise completely destroyed."

"Then that is the real reason you were so anxious to secure the liner, because its steel can be used for protection against the rays?"

"**W**ELL, I had something like that in mind, but an offensive device made from it is what I am after. Iron is too scarce to be used extensively as a covering for our houses. Until we can invade the enemy cities in comparative safety, we are at their mercy. Sooner or later they will be successful against our triple defense, of which you have seen the two most important parts, the infra-red and the blue death rays. The infra-red is useless against proper insulation, and the blue ray cannot penetrate metal. The third device may serve no more than once—you will pardon me for not divulging it. Although I place most of my hopes in some kind of a steel fighting machine, I lack a transparent window which will have the same resistant qualities as the steel. I have experimented with glass from the vessel brought from your world, but it will not do."

By early dawn, the fallen airship had cooled sufficiently to permit its removal from the edge of the river, and it was taken to a place where Oltor and several others opened and examined it with a view to determining the method of generation of the mysterious rays. To their keen disappointment, the heat of the red beams had so wrecked the delicate arrangement of tubes and machinery that no useful knowledge could be gained.

Returned to their quarters, the three sat down, in troubled thought. The earth men were faced with the possibility of having to remain forever in a strange world, should the Royas be victorious in their next attack. Oltor gloomily viewed the prospects of his ancient race bowing in defeat to a people they had always looked down upon. Suddenly, Staunton sprang to his feet.

"I have it! I have it! Remember the cabin of that airship? It had a transparent place in the iron wall right near the machinery, and the operators must have looked through it in safety while they manipulated the mechanism. The iron cabin proves there was danger within the ship from the rays. The only bodies found were crowded in that small room!"

Oltor extended his hand. "My friend, if your surmise is correct, you will have been instrumental in saving my people. Let us go again to the burned shell."

They hurried to the scene of their previous dis-

appointment, and removed a clear slab of crystal from the cabin of the ship. Oltor subjected it to tests, and after a time, looked up from his work, excitedly.

"This is a rare form of rock, to be found only in certain parts of the mountains, but before the day is over, I will have the vessel in the lake prepared for offensive warfare, and taken to the southern ocean in readiness for an advance on the sea cities of the Royas. We are taking somewhat of a chance, but everything indicates that we have the right material."

Calling to him the leading men of the race, he explained the discovery and his plans. Speed was needed, for possibly the next night would find the enemy insulated against heat, which would leave the red cities almost defenseless.

During the day, the parties sent out to get the rock found every known deposit either exhausted or heavily guarded by groups of brown skinned Royas, armed with death dealing machines which they used with telling effect. Oltor's people had to bring fighting devices and do battle for the rock, and by nightfall the liner was not completely equipped.

With the coming of darkness, the cities of the red men were put on the defense. Ray towers were manned, new tubes placed at strategic points, and Oltor arranged some new apparatus, without an explanation of its purpose. On various towers and pinnacles, he placed his mechanism, then, high overhead, he left a giant sphere in the control of one man, who had orders to maneuver it over the city, above the enemy ships, should an attack start, and to leave it on a signal from Oltor's tower.

Preparations being completed, the wait began. Before the watchers had time to get weary, the sky hummed faintly with the sound of numbers of engines. The extraordinarily keen tactile sense of the Astarakians apprised them of the oncoming fleet almost as soon as the earth men were able to hear them. Immediately the night blazed with long fingers of light. In the distance, flying high, came nearly a score of ships, gray in color. Oltor's fears had been realized—some kind of insulation had been placed around them. Heat beams, concentrated on them as they neared the city, seemed to have no effect. Rapidly, they approached. From the towers, houses could be seen starting to crumble beneath the deadly rays. The construction of the generators apparently limited the play of the descending beams, for a ship had to be almost directly over a building before affecting it. Several of the invaders must have been poorly insulated against the terrific heat coming from the city, and they turned back, one of them falling. Inexorably, the others continued coming on. Fascinated, the earth men watched this thrilling battle of silence.

When the fleet was well over the edge of the city, Oltor gave the signal for the man in the sphere, far above, to leave. His companions read thoughts of exultation. "They have come right into my trap, all of them!"

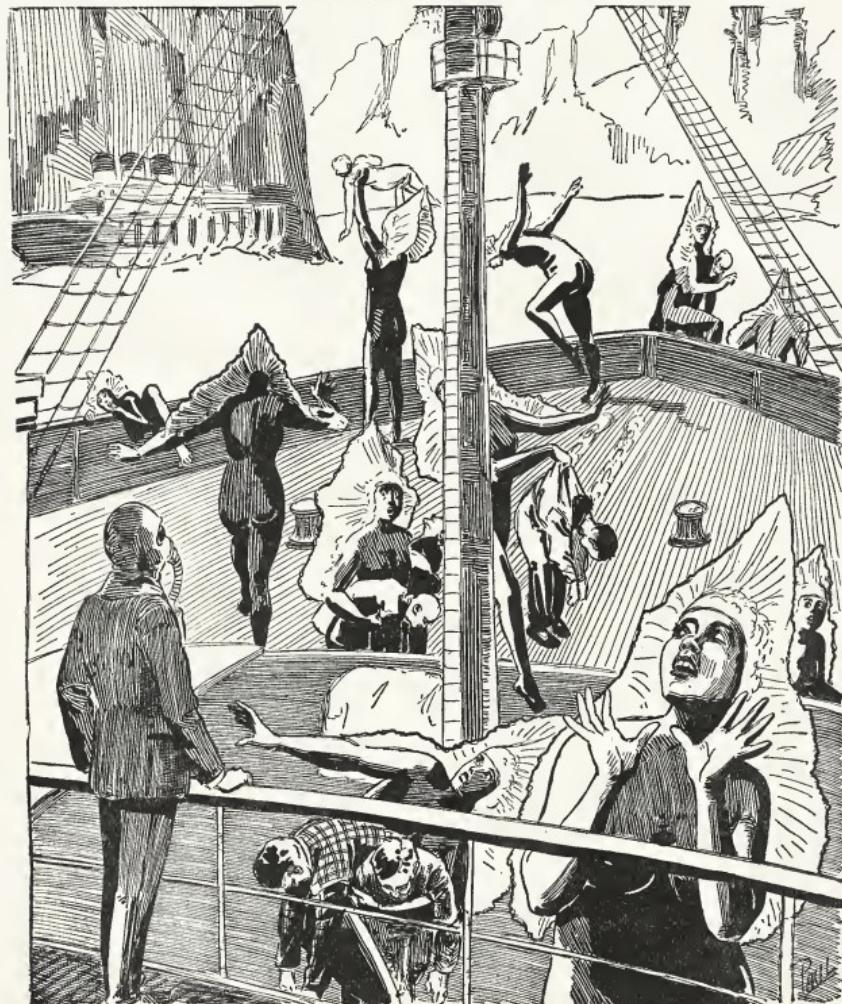
After allowing enough time for the escape of the sphere operator, he threw a switch.

*(Continued on page 366)*

# *The VOICE* *from the INNER WORLD*

*By A. Hyatt Verrill*

Author of "The Plague of the Living Dead," "Through the Crater's Rim," etc.



... And it was evident that the others were equally afraid of me ... they stood regarding me with an odd mixture of wonder and terror on their huge faces.

SECOND HONORABLE MENTION IN THE \$500 PRIZE COVER CONTEST

Awarded to A. Hyatt Verrill, New York City, for "A Voice from the Inner World."

## The Voice from the Inner World

By A. HYATT VERRILL

 N the eighteenth of October, the New York papers reported the appearance of a remarkable meteor which had been seen in mid-Pacific, and the far more startling announcement that it was feared that the amazing celestial visitor had struck and destroyed a steamship.

"At eleven-fifteen last evening," read the account in the *Herald*, "the Panama-Hawaiian Line steamship *Chiriqui* reported by radio the appearance of an immense meteor which suddenly appeared above the horizon to the southeast, and which increased rapidly in size and brilliance. Within ten minutes from the time the phenomenon was first sighted, it appeared as a huge greenish sphere of dazzling brilliance high in the sky, and heading, apparently, directly for the *Chiriqui*. Almost at the same time as reported by the *Chiriqui*, several other ships, among them the Miners and Merchants Line *Vulcan*, and the Japanese liner *Fujisawa Maru* also reported the meteorite, although they were more than one thousand miles apart and equidistant from the position of the *Chiriqui*.

"In the midst of a sentence describing the appearance of the rapidly approaching meteor, the *Chiriqui's* wireless message came to an abrupt end, and all attempts to get into further communication with her operator failed. The other vessels reported that a scintillating flash, like an explosion, was followed by the meteor's disappearance, and it is feared that the immense aerolite may have struck the *Chiriqui*, and utterly destroyed her with all on board. As no SOS has been received, and as the ship's radio broke off with the words: 'It is very close and the sea is as bright as day. Below the immense mass of green fire are two smaller spheres of intense red. It is so near we can hear it roaring like a terrific wind. It is headed—' It is probable that the vessel, if struck, was instantly destroyed. It has been suggested, however, that it is possible that the meteor or meteors were accompanied by electrical phenomena which may have put the *Chiriqui's* wireless apparatus out of commission and that the ship may be safe."

Later editions of the press announced that no word had been received from the *Chiriqui*, that other ships had reported the meteor, and that two of these had radioed that the aerolite, instead of

exploding, had been seen to continue on its way and gradually disappear beyond the horizon. These reports somewhat allayed the fears that the *Chiriqui* had been struck by the meteor, and prominent scientists expressed the opinion that the supposed explosion had been merely an optical illusion caused by its passage through some dense or cloudy layer of air. They also quoted numerous cases of immense meteors having been seen by observers over immense distances, and declared their belief that the aerolite had not reached the earth, but had merely passed through the outer atmosphere. When asked regarding the possibility of the meteor having affected the ship's wireless apparatus, experts stated that such might have been the case, although, hitherto, severe electrical disturbances had never been associated with the passage of meteors. Moreover, they declared that even if the wireless had been injured, it could have been repaired in a few hours, and that they could not explain the continued silence of the *Chiriqui*. Word also came from Panama that the naval commandant at Balboa had despatched a destroyer to search for the *Chiriqui*, or any survivors of the catastrophe if the ship had been destroyed.

A few hours later, despatches were received from various points in Central and South America, reporting the meteor of the previous night. All of these agreed that the fiery mass had swept across the heavens in a wide arc and had vanished in the east beyond the summits of the Andes.

It was, therefore, fairly certain that the *Chiriqui* had not been struck by the meteor, and in a few days the incident was completely forgotten by the public at large.

But when, ten days later, the warship reported that no sign of the missing ship could be found, and the officials of the Panama - Hawaiian Line admitted that the *Chiriqui* was four days overdue, interest was again aroused. Then came the startling news, featured in screaming headlines, that the meteor

or its twin had been again reported by various ships in the Pacific, and that the U. S. S. *McCracken*, which had been scouring the seas for traces of the missing *Chiriqui*, had sent in a detailed report of the meteor's appearance, and that her wireless had gone "dead," exactly as had that of the *Chiriqui*.

And when, after every effort, no communication

THE author of this story, well known to our readers, in submitting his prize story, adopts a treatment entirely different from that of practically all the rest of the winners. He has submitted a tale so characteristic and so original that it holds your interest by sheer strength. That there should be a cannibalistic race of females somewhere in our world is, after all, not impossible nor improbable. There are still cannibals at large, at the present writing, and probably will be for many generations to come. While the story has its gruesome moments, it also contains good science and Mr. Verrill certainly knows how to treat his subject and get the most from it. As a "different" sort of story, we highly recommend it to your attention.

## AMAZING STORIES

could be established with the war vessel, and when two weeks had elapsed without word from her, it was generally conceded that both ships had been destroyed by the amazing celestial visitor. For a time the double catastrophe filled the papers to the exclusion of nearly everything else, and such everyday features as scandals and murder trials were crowded to the back pages of the dailies to make room for long articles on meteors and missing ships and interviews with scientists. But as no more meteors appeared, and as no more ships vanished, the subject gradually lost interest and was no longer news.

About three months after the first report of the green meteor appeared (on January fifteenth, to be exact) I was in Peru, visiting my daughter, when I received a communication of such an utterly amazing character that it appeared incredible, and yet was so borne out by facts and details that it had all the earmarks of truth. So astounding was this communication that, despite the fact that it will unquestionably be scoffed at by the public, I feel that it should be given to the world. As soon as I had received the story I hurried with it to the American Minister in Lima, and related the all that I had heard. He agreed with me that the authorities at Washington should be acquainted with the matter at once, and together we devoted many hours to coding the story which was cabled in the secret cipher of the State Department. The officials, however, were inclined to regard the matter as a hoax, and, as far as I am aware, no steps have yet been taken to follow out the suggestions contained in the communication which I received, and thus save humanity from a terrible fate. Personally, I am convinced that the amazing tale which came to me in such an astounding and unexpected manner is absolutely true, incredible as it may seem, but whether fact or fiction, my readers may decide for themselves.

My son-in-law was intensely interested in radio, and devoted all of his spare time to devising and constructing receiving sets, and in his home in the delightful residential suburb of Miraflores, were a number of receiving sets of both conventional and original design. Having been closely in touch with the subject for several years, I was deeply interested in Frank's experiments, and especially in a new type of hook-up which had given most remarkable results in selectivity and distance. Practically every broadcasting station in America, and many in Europe, had been logged by the little set, and on several occasions faint signals had been heard which, although recognizable as English, evidently emanated from a most remote station. These, oddly enough, had come in at the same hour each night, and each time had continued for exactly the same length of time.

We were discussing this, and trying to again pick up the unintelligible and unidentified signals on that memorable January evening, when, without warning, and as clearly as though sent from the station at Buenos Ayres, came the most astounding communication which ever greeted human ears, and which, almost verbatim, was as follows:\*

\*The message as it came in, was halting, and interrupted, with many unintelligible words and repetitions, as if the

“LISTEN! For God’s sake, I implore all who may hear my words to listen! And believe what I say no matter how unbelievable it may seem, for the fate of thousands of human beings, the fate of the human race may depend upon you who by chance may hear this message from another world. My name is James Berry, my home is Butte, Montana, my profession a mining engineer, and I am speaking through the short wave transmitter of the steamship *Chiriquí* on which I was a passenger when the terrible, the incredible events occurred which I am about to relate. On the evening of October sixteenth, the *Chiriquí* was steaming across the Pacific in calm weather when our attention was attracted by what appeared to be an unusually brilliant meteor of a peculiar greenish color. It first appeared above the horizon to the southeast, and very rapidly increased in size and brilliancy. At the time I was particularly struck by the fact that it left no trail of light or fire behind it, as is usual with large meteorites, but so rapidly did it approach that I had little time to wonder at this. Within a few moments from the time that it was first seen, the immense sphere of green incandescence had grown to the size of the moon, and the entire sea for miles about our ship was illuminated by a sickly green light. It appeared to be headed directly towards our ship, and, standing as I was on the bridge-deck near the wheel-house, I heard the chief officer cry out: ‘My God, it will strike us!’ By now the mass of fire had altered in appearance, and a short distance below the central green mass could be seen two smaller spheres of blinding red, like huge globes of molten metal. By now, too, the noise made by the meteor was plainly audible, sounding like the roar of surf or the sound of a tornado.

“Everyone aboard the ship was panic-stricken; women screamed, men cursed and shouted, and the crew rushed to man the boats, as everyone felt that the *Chiriquí* was doomed. What happened next I can scarcely describe, so rapidly did the events occur. As the meteor seemed about to hurl itself upon the ship, there was a blinding flash of light, a terrific detonation, and I saw men and women falling to the decks as if struck down by shell fire. The next instant the meteor vanished completely, and intense blackness followed the blinding glare. At the same moment, I was aware of a peculiar pungent, suffocating odor which, perhaps owing to my long experience with deadly gases in mining work, I at once recognized as some noxious gas. Almost involuntarily, and dully realizing that by some miracle the ship had escaped destruction, I dashed below and reached my cabin almost overcome by the fumes which now penetrated every portion of the ship. Among my possessions was a new type of gas-mask which had been especially designed for mine work, and my idea was to don this,

sender were laboring under an intense strain or was an amateur. For the sake of clarity and continuity, the communication has been edited and filled in, but not altered in any detail.

\*The metropolitan papers reported the meteor on the eighteenth and stated it was observed by those on the *Chiriquí* on the evening of the seventeenth, but it must be remembered that the *Chiriquí* was in the western Pacific and hence had gained a day in time.

for I felt sure that the meteor had exploded close to the ship and had released vast quantities of poisonous gases which might hang about for a long time.

"Although almost overcome by the choking fumes, I managed to find and put on the apparatus, for one of its greatest advantages was the rapidity and ease with which it could be adjusted, it having been designed for emergency use. But before it was fairly in place over my face, the electric light in my room went out and I was in complete darkness. Also, the ship seemed strangely still, and as I groped my way to the stateroom door it suddenly dawned upon me that the engines had stopped, that there was no longer the whirr of dynamos from the depths of the hull. Not a light glimmered in the passageway, and twice, as I felt my way towards the social hall, I stumbled over the sprawled bodies of men, while in the saloon itself I several times stepped upon the soft and yielding flesh of passengers who lay where they had been struck down by the poisonous gas. In all probability, I thought, I was the sole survivor aboard the ship, unless some of the firemen and engineers survived, and I wondered how I would manage to escape, if the vessel should be sighted by some other ship, or if it should be my gruesome task to search the *Chiriqui* from stem to stern, drag the bodies of the dead to the deck and cast them into the sea, and remain—perhaps for weeks—alone upon the ship until rescued by some passing vessel. But as I reached the door and stepped upon the deck all such thoughts were driven from my brain as I blinked my eyes and stared about in dumbfounded amazement. I had stepped from Stygian darkness into dazzling light. Blinded for the moment, I closed my eyes, and when I again opened them I reeled to the rail with a cry of terror. Poised above the ship's masts, and so enormous that it appeared to shut out half the sky, was the stupendous meteor like a gigantic globe of green fire, and seemingly less than one hundred feet above me. Still nearer, and hanging but a few yards above the bow and stern of the ship, were the two smaller spheres of glowing red. Cowering against the rail, expecting to be shrivelled into a charred cinder at any instant, I gazed transfixed and paralyzed at the titanic masses of flaming light above the ship.

"Then reason came back to me. My only chance to escape was to leap into the sea, and I half clambered upon the rail prepared to take the plunge. A scream, like that of a madman, came from my lips. Below me was no sign of the waves, but a limitless void, while, immeasurably distant beneath the ship, I could dimly see the crinkled surface of the sea. The *Chiriqui* was floating in space!

"It was impossible, absolutely preposterous, and I felt convinced that I had gone mad, or that the small quantity of gas I had breathed had affected my brain and had induced the nightmarish vision. Perhaps, I thought, the meteors above the ship were also visionary, and I again stared upward. Then, I knew that I was insane. The spheres of green and red light were rushing upward as I could see by the brilliant stars studding the sky, and the ship upon which I stood was following in their wake! Weak, limp as a rag, I slumped to the deck

and lay staring at the great globes above me. But the insanely impossible events which had crowded upon my overwrought senses were as nothing to the amazing discovery I now made.

"As my eyes became accustomed to the glare of the immense green sphere, I saw that instead of being merely a ball of fire it had definite form. About its middle extended a broad band from which slender rods of light extended. Round or ovoid spots seemed placed in definite order about it, and from the extremities of its axes lines or cables, clearly outlined by the glare, extended downward to the red spheres above the ship. By now, I was so firmly convinced that I was irrational, that these new and absolutely stunning discoveries did not excite or surprise me in the least, and as if in a particularly vivid dream, I lay there gazing upward, and dully, half consciously speculating on what it all meant. Gradually, too, it dawned upon me that the huge sphere with its encircling band of duller light was rotating. The circular markings, which I thought were marvelously like the ports of a ship, were certainly moving from top to bottom of the sphere, and I could distinctly hear low, vibrant humming.

"The next second I jerked upright with a start and my scalp tingled. Reason had suddenly returned to me. The thing was no meteor, no celestial body, but some marvelous machine, some devilish invention of man, some gigantic form of airship which—God only knew why—had by some incredible means captured the *Chiriqui*, had lifted the twenty thousand ton ship into the air and was bearing her off with myself, the only survivor of all the ship's company, witnessing the miraculous happening! It was the most insane thought that had yet entered my brain, but I knew now for a certainty that I was perfectly sane, and, oddly enough, now that I was convinced that the catastrophe which had overtaken the *Chiriqui* was the devilish work of human beings, I was no longer frightened and my former nightmarish terror of things unknown, gave place to the most intense anger and an inexpressible hatred of the fiends who, without warning or reason, had annihilated hundreds of men and women by means of this new and irresistible engine of destruction. But I was helpless. Alone upon the stolen and stricken ship I could do nothing. By what tremendous force the spherical airship was moving through space, by what unknown power it was lifting the ship and carrying it,—slung like the gondola of a Zeppelin beneath the sphere,—were matters beyond my comprehension. Calmly, now that I felt assured that I was rational and was the victim of my fellow men—fiendish as they might be,—I walked aft to where one red sphere hung a few yards above the ship's deck.

"**T**HREE seemed no visible connection between it and the vessel, but I noticed that everything movable upon the deck, the iron cable, the wire ropes, the coiled steel lines of the after derrick, all extended upward from the deck, as rigid as bars of metal, while crackling blue sparks like electrical discharges scintillated from the ship's metal work below the red sphere. Evidently, I de-

cided, the red mass was actuated by some form of electrical energy or magnetism, and I gave the area beneath it a wide berth. Retracing my way to the bow of the ship, I found similar conditions there. As I walked towards the waist of the ship again I mounted the steps to the bridge, hoping from that height to get a better view of the monstrous machine holding the *Chiriqui* captive. I knew that in the chart-house I would find powerful glasses with which to study the machine. Upon the bridge the bodies of the quartermaster, the first officer and an apprentice lay sprawled grotesquely, and across the chart-house door lay the captain. Reaching down I lifted him by the shoulders to move him to one side, and to my amazement I discovered that he was not dead. His heart beat, his pulse, though slow and faint, was plain, he was breathing and his face, still ruddy, was that of a sleeping man rather than of a corpse.

"A wild thought rushed through my brain, and hastily I rushed to the other bodies. There was no doubt of it. All were alive and merely unconscious. The gas had struck them down, but had not killed them, and it came to me as a surprise, though I should long before have realized it, that the fumes had been purposely discharged by the beings who had captured the vessel. Possibly, I mentally decided, they had made a mistake and had failed in their intention to destroy the persons upon the ship, or again, was it not possible that they had intentionally rendered the ship's company unconscious, and had not intended to destroy their lives? Forgetting my original purpose in visiting the bridge, I worked feverishly to resuscitate the captain, but all to no purpose. Many gases, I knew, would render a man unconscious without actually injuring him, and I was also aware, that when under the influence of some of these, the victims could not be revived until the definite period of the gases' effect had passed. So, feeling certain that in due time the captain and the others would come to of their own accord, I entered the chart-room and, securing the skipper's binoculars, I again stepped upon the bridge. As I could not conveniently use the glasses with my gas-mask in place, and as I felt sure there was no longer any danger from the fumes, I started to remove the apparatus. But no sooner did a breath of the air enter my mouth than I hastily readjusted the contrivance, for the gas which had struck down everyone but myself was as strong as ever. Indeed, the mere whiff of the fumes made my head reel and swim, and I was forced to steady myself by grasping the bridge-rail until the dizzy spell passed.

"Once more myself, I focussed the glasses as best I could upon the whirling sphere above the ship. But I could make out little more than by my naked eyes. The band about the center or equator of the globular thing was, I could now see, divided into segments, each of which bore a round, slightly convex, eye-like object from the centers of which extended slender rods which vibrated with incalculable speed. Indeed, the whole affair reminded me of the glass models of protozoans which I had seen in the American Museum of Natural History. These minute marine organisms I knew, moved with great rapidity by means of vibrating, hair-

like appendages or cilia, and I wondered if the enormous spherical machine at which I was gazing, might not move through space in a similar manner by means of vibrating rods moving with such incredible speed that, slender as they were, they produced enormous propulsive power. Also, I could now see that the two extremities of the sphere, or as I may better express it, the axes, were equipped with projecting bosses or shafts to which the cables supporting the red spheres were attached. And as I peered through the glasses at the thing, the huge green sphere, which had been hitherto traveling on an even keel, or, in other words, with the central band vertical, now shifted its position and one end swung sharply upward, throwing the band about the centre at an acute angle. Involuntarily I grasped the rail of the bridge expecting to be thrown from my feet by the abrupt uptilting of the ship. But to my utter amazement the *Chiriqui* remained on an even plane and I then saw that as the sphere tilted, the cable at the uppermost axis ran rapidly out so that the two red spheres, which evidently supported the captive ship, remained in their original relative horizontal position. No sign of life was visible upon the machine above me, and I surmised that whoever might be handling the thing was within the sphere.

"Wondering how high we had risen above the sea, I stepped to the starboard end of the bridge and glanced down, and an involuntary exclamation escaped my lips. Far beneath the ship and clearly visible through the captain's glasses was land! I could distinguish the white line marking surf breaking on a rocky shore, and ahead I could make out the cloud-topped, serried summits of a mighty range of mountains. Not until then did I realize the terrific speed at which the machine and captive vessel were traveling. I had been subconsciously aware that a gale had been blowing, but I had not stopped to realize that this was no ordinary wind, but was the rush of air caused by the rapidity of motion. But as I peered at the mountains through the binoculars, and saw the distant surface of the earth whizzing backward far beneath the *Chiriqui's* keel, I knew that we were hurtling onward with the speed of the fastest scout airplane.

"Even as I gazed, the mountains seemed to rush towards me until, in a few minutes after I had first seen them, they appeared almost directly under the ship. Then the gigantic machine above me suddenly altered its course, it veered sharply to one side and swept along the range of summits far beneath. For some reason, just why I cannot explain, I dashed to the binnacle and saw that we were traveling to the south, and it flashed across my mind, that I had a dim recollection of noticing, when I first realized the nature of the machine which had been mistaken for a meteor, that by the stars, we were moving eastward. In that case, my suddenly alert mind told me, the land below must be some portion of America, and if so, judging by the altitude of the mountains, that they must be the Andes. All of this rushed through my brain instantly, and in the brief lapse of time in which I sprang to the binnacle and back to my observation point at the bridge-rail.

"Now, I saw, we were rapidly descending, and

focussing my glasses upon the mountains, I made out an immense conical peak in the top of which was a gigantic black opening. Without doubt it was the crater of some stupendous extinct volcano, and, with a shock, I realized that the machine and the ship were headed directly for the yawning opening in the crater. The next instant we were dropping with lightning speed towards it, and so terrified and dumfounded had I become that I could not move from where I stood. Even before I could grasp the fact, the *Chiriquí* was enclosed by towering, rocky walls, inky blackness surrounded me, there was an upward breath-taking rush of air, a roar as of a thousand hurricanes. The *Chiriquí* rocked and pitched beneath my feet, as if in a heavy sea; I clung desperately to the bridge-rail for support and I felt sure that the ship had been dropped into the abysmal crater, that the next instant the vessel would crash into fragments as it struck bottom, or worse, that it would sink into the molten incandescent lava which might fill the depths of the volcano. For what seemed hours, the awful fall continued, though like as not the terrible suspense lasted for only a few minutes, and then, without warning, so abruptly that I lost my balance and was flung to the bridge, the ship ceased falling, an indescribable blue light succeeded the blackness, and unable to believe my senses I found the ship floating motionless, still suspended from the giant mechanism overhead, above a marvelous landscape.

"ON every hand, as far as I could see, stretched jagged rocks, immense cliffs, stupendous crags and rugged knife-ridged hills of the most dazzling reds, yellows and purples. Mile-deep cañons cut the forbidding plains, which here and there showed patches of dull green, and in one spot I saw a stream of emerald-hued water pouring in a foaming cataract into a fathomless rift in the rock. But I gave little attention to these sights at the time. My gaze was riveted upon a strange, weird city which capped the cliffs close to the waterfall, and almost directly beneath the *Chiriquí*. Slowly we were dropping towards it, and I could see that the buildings which at first sight had appeared of immense height and tower-like form, were in reality gigantic basaltic columns capped with superimposed edifices of gleaming yellow.

"The next second the glasses dropped from my shaking, nerveless hands. Gathered on an open space of greenish plain were hundreds of human beings! But were they human? In form and features, as nearly as I could judge at that distance, they were human, but in color they were scarlet, and surmounting the head and extending along the arms to the elbows on every individual was a whitish, membranous frill, which at first sight reminded me of an Indian's war bonnet. The beings appeared to be of average height, but as the *Chiriquí*'s keel touched solid ground and, keeling to one side, she rested upon one of her bilges, I saw with a shock, that the scarlet creatures were of gigantic size, fully thirty feet in height, and that, without exception, all were females! All were stark naked; but despite the frills upon their heads and shoulders, despite their bizarre scarlet skins, despite

their gigantic proportions, they were unquestionably human beings, women without doubt, and of the most perfect proportions, the most graceful forms and the most regular and even handsome features. Beside the stranded ship, they loomed as giants; but against the stupendous proportions of their land and city, they appeared no larger than ordinary mortals. By now they were streaming from their houses and even in the surprise and excitement of that moment I noticed that the giant rocky columns were perforated by windows and doors, and had obviously been hollowed out to form dwellings. Meantime, too, the huge machine which had captured the *Chiriquí*, had descended and was lying at rest, and no longer emitting its green light, upon a cradle erected near the waterfall, and from openings in its central band several of the scarlet, giant Amazons were emerging. How long, I wondered, would I remain undiscovered? How long would it be before one of the female giants spied me? And then, what would be my fate? Why had they captured the ship? Where was it? What was this strange land reached through a crater?

"All these thoughts rushed through my brain as I peered cautiously down at the giant women who swarmed about the ship. But I had not long to wait for an answer to my first mental question. With a sudden spring, one of the women leaped to the *Chiriquí*'s anchor, with a second bound she was on the fore deck, and close at her heels came a score of others. Standing upon the deck with her head fringed by its erect vibrating membrane level with the boat-deck, she gazed about for an instant. Then, catching sight of the form of a sailor sprawled upon the deck, she uttered a shrill, piercing cry, leaped forward, and, before my unbelieving, horror-stricken eyes, tore the still living, palpitating body to pieces and ravenously devoured it.

"Unable to stir through the very repulsiveness of the scene, realizing that my turn might be next, I gazed fascinated. But the giant cannibal female was not to feast in peace. As her companions reached the deck, they rushed upon her and fought viciously for a portion of the reeking flesh. The struggle of these awful giants, as smeared with human blood, scratching and clawing, uttering shrill cries of rage, they rolled and fought on the deck, was indescribably terrible and disgusting. But it came to an abrupt end. With a bound, a giantess of giantesses, a powerfully-muscled female, appeared, and like cowed beasts, the others drew aside, licking their chops, the membranes on their heads rising and falling in excitement, like the frills on an iguana lizard, and watching the newly-arrived giantess with furtive eyes. Evidently she was the leader or chieftainess, and in curt but strangely shrill and, of course, to me, utterly unintelligible words, she gave orders to the others. Instantly, the horde of women began swarming over the ship, searching every nook and corner, and, wherever they discovered the inert bodies of the ship's company, dragged them on deck and piled them in heaps. Shaking with abject terror, I crouched back of the bridge, and racked my brains for thought of some safe spot in which to hide. But before I could make up my mind, one

of the terrifying, monstrous females sprang upon the bridge and rushed towards me. With a maniacal scream, I turned and fled. Then, before me, blocking my way, there appeared another of the creatures. And then a most marvelous and surprising thing happened. Instead of falling upon me as I expected her to do, the giantess turned, and with a scream that equalled my own, leaped over the rail and fled to the uttermost extremity of the deck.

"I forgot my terror in my amazement. Why should this giant, cannibal woman fear me? Why should she run from me when, a few moments before, she had been fighting over a meal of an unconscious sailor? And it was evident that the others were equally afraid of me, for at her cry, and my appearance, all had rushed as far from me as possible, and stood regarding me with an odd mixture of wonder and terror on their huge faces. And then it occurred to me that their fear was, perhaps, due to my gas-mask, to the apparatus that transformed me from a human being to a weird-looking monster. At any rate, I was evidently safe from molestation for the time being, and thanking my lucky stars that I had on the mask, I descended from the bridge, the giantesses retreating as I advanced. I entered the captain's cabin and locked the door.

"Here I breathed more freely, for even if the women overcame their fear of me and attempted to capture me, the steel doors and walls of the cabin would be impregnable defenses. Moreover, upon the wall above the bunk, was a rifle, in a drawer of the dresser was a loaded revolver, and a short search revealed a plentiful supply of cartridges. Yes, if I were attacked, I could give a good account of myself, and I determined, if worst came to the worst, that I would blow out my brains rather than fall a victim to the female cannibal horde.

"Dully, through the thick walls of the cabin, I could hear the sounds of the women on the deck, but I had no desire to witness what was going on, and seated upon the captain's chair, I thought over the events which had transpired during the past few hours and tried to find a reasonable solution to the incredible happenings.

"That I was within the earth seemed certain, though utterly fantastic, but who the giant women were, why they had captured the *Chiriqui* or by what unknown, tremendous power their marvelous airship was operated, were all utterly beyond my comprehension. But I must hurry on and relate the more important matters, for my time is limited and the important thing is to let the world know how the human race may be saved from the terrible fate which has befallen me and all those upon the *Chiriqui*, and upon the destroyer *McCracken*, for that vessel, too, has fallen a victim to these horrible cannibalistic giantesses here within the centre of the earth.

**H**UNGER and thirst drove me at last from my refuge in the captain's cabin, and armed with the loaded rifle and revolver, I cautiously peered out and stepped upon the deck. Only one woman was in sight, and instantly, at sight of me, she fled away. Not a body of the hundreds of

men and women aboard the ship was visible, and feeling relieved that I was for a time safe, I stepped to the ship's rail and peered over. Scores of the women were carrying the inert forms of the unconscious men and women towards the nearby city. Stealthily I hurried below in search of food and drink. Fears assailed me that the women had, in all probability, preceded me and carried off everything edible. But I need not have worried about food. I was yet to learn the horrible truth and the gruesome habits of these red giantesses. The saloon, the corridors, the staterooms, everything, had been searched, and every person upon the vessel removed. In the pantry I found an abundance of food, and quickly satisfied my hunger and thirst. I pondered on my next move. The skipper's cabin seemed my safest refuge. I placed a supply of provisions within it, and locked myself in the little room again. For several days nothing of great importance occurred. I say days, but there are no days in this terrible place. There is no sun, no moon, no stars and no darkness. The whole place is illuminated by a brilliant, greenish light that issues from a distant mountain range, and which seems to be of the same character as that which emanated from the spherical air machine. Fortunately I had presence of mind enough to keep my watch going, as well as the captain's chronometer, for otherwise I would have had no knowledge of the passage of time. Once or twice the scarlet women visited the ship, but seemed nervous and wary, and made no effort to approach or molest me, merely gazed about as if searching for something—perhaps for me—and then retiring. Several times, too, I ventured on deck, and peered over the ship's side, but saw none of the giantesses, although with the glasses I could see crowds of the beings about the city in the distance.

"Also, I noticed among them, several individuals who were much smaller than the rest, and who appeared to be men, although I could not be sure. I also discovered, and almost lost my life in the discovery, that the atmosphere of this place is unfit for human beings to breathe, and is thick with sulphurous fumes. Close to the ground these fumes are so dense that a person would succumb in a few moments, but at the height of the *Chiriqui*'s decks, nearly seventy feet above the rocky bed on which she rests, the air is breathable, although it causes one to choke and cough after a few minutes. And I am sure that the houses of these giant beings have been built on the summits of the basalt columns in order to avoid the suffocating fumes of the lower levels. Later, too, I learned that the membrane-like frills upon these creatures are a sort of gills, or as I might say, natural gas-masks, which by some means enable the beings to breathe the sulphur-laden air. But even with these, they avoid the lower areas where the fumes are the worst, and only visit them when necessity arises, which accounts for my being left in peace, with none of the horrible women near the ship, for days at a time. I discovered the presence of the sulphur gas on the first day when, attempting to eat, I removed my gas-mask. Suffocating as I found the fumes, I was compelled to endure them, and gradually I became slightly accustomed to them, so that now

I have little trouble in breathing during the short time it takes me to eat my meals. At all other times I must wear the apparatus, and I thank God that this is so, for I know now that it is the gas-mask which so far has preserved my life.

"On the tenth day after my arrival I noticed a number of the giantesses gathering about the huge, spherical airship which still rested on its cradle near the *Chiriquí*, but which, I have forgotten to state, ceased to emit its green or red lights after it had landed. Lying there it resembled nothing so much as a gigantic can-buoy or a floating mine, if one can imagine a buoy two hundred yards in diameter.

"On the day I mentioned, all interests seemed to be centered on the thing, and cautiously peering from the shelter of the deck-house, I watched the proceedings. Presently several of the women entered the sphere through an opening in its middle band; the aperture closed behind them, and immediately there was a low, humming sound as of machinery. As the sounds issued from the sphere, the cables to which were attached the smaller spheres (which glowed red when carrying the *Chiriquí* through the air) were drawn in until the two smaller spheres were resting in recesses at the axes of the large sphere, and where they appeared merely as hemi-spherical projections. Then, slowly at first, but with ever increasing speed, the slender rods about the large sphere began to move back and forth, or rather in an oscillating manner, until they were vibrating with such rapidity that they appeared merely rays of light. Slowly, majestically, the immense globe rose from its cradle, and gathering headway, leaped upward to an immense height. Then, tilting at an angle, it passed over the city and headed for an immense pinnacle of rock, which, fully seven miles from where I stood, reminded me of a gigantic chimney or funnel.

"Although it was barely visible to the naked eye, I could see it distinctly through the glasses, and I watched it with the most intense and concentrated interest. For a few moments it remained, poised a hundred feet or so above the pinnacle. Then, from the towering, tapering rock, a terrific jet of steam roared forth, and striking the great spherical machine above it, hurled it upward and beyond my vision. Give close heed to these words, whoever may, by God's grace, be listening to what I say, for upon them may hinge the fate of the human race. Only by this means, by being shot upward by this titanic jet of steam, can the airship leave this subterranean land and emerge through the crater by which it entered bearing the *Chiriquí*. Within this place it can sail at will; once above the crater opening it can travel anywhere, although it cannot land; but by some unknown force or magnetic attraction or freak of gravitation the machine cannot ascend through the crater, although, when over it, it will drop like a plummet through the opening. And herein—for the sake of humanity, listen to this and remember my words—lies a means of destroying the machine, for by surrounding the crater with powerful guns the sphere can be shelled as it emerges and utterly destroyed. To attempt to do so as it returns to the crater would be suicidal, for

once in the outer air, it emanates vast quantities of most poisonous gas, and all living things within a radius of several miles would be struck down unconscious, as were my companions on the *Chiriquí*. Even if gas-masks were worn, it would be most difficult to destroy the machine as it descended, for it travels with incredible speed in its descent and, moreover, the terrible creatures who man the thing would see that enemies lurked near and would find some means of destroying them, or by the mysterious magnet force they control, would draw even the heaviest cannon to the machine as an ordinary magnet draws needles or iron filings. So if the thing is to be destroyed, it must be done as the machine emerges from the crater. Would to God that I could tell where the crater is, but beyond feeling sure it is at the summit of an Andean peak, I have no means of locating it.

"But I was telling of what occurred on that tenth day when the spherical airship was projected from my sight by the blast of steam. As the machine vanished, the women who had watched its departure, returned to their city, and I swept the landscape with my glasses, wondering at the bleak, terrible scenery and bizarre colors.

**A**S I focussed the binoculars upon a level plateau, perhaps a mile from where the *Chiriquí* rested, I gasped in surprise. Clearly defined, lay the remnants of what had once been a steamship! Had I given the matter thought, I might have known that the *Chiriquí* was not the first vessel to have fallen a victim to these awful beings; but the sight of another ship's skeleton came to me as a terrific shock. As nearly as I could judge, the vessel had been dismantled, for only the great steel frame remained, with the mighty boilers and other portions of the ship scattered about, and gruesomely like some mammoth creature lying dismembered upon the earth.

"I was consumed with a mad desire to visit that pathetic wreck, but I knew not to what dangers I would be exposed, once I left the security of my ship. Not a being was in sight, however, and carefully I studied the land, visually measuring the relative distances between myself and the wreck, and between the city and the route I must traverse. Having already observed that the giantesses moved slowly and cumbrously on foot, I at last decided that even if they attempted to intercept me I could regain the *Chiriquí* before I was overtaken, so I threw caution to the winds and prepared to undertake my hazardous journey. Slinging the loaded rifle on my back, with the revolver at my belt, and still further arming myself with a keen-edged fire-axe, I hunted up the pilot's ladder, lowered it over the lowest side of the ship,—which was also the side farthest from the city,—and clambering down the *Chiriquí*'s lofty sides, leaped down upon the ground. To my amazement, I landed in a dense jungle of dry, tough vegetation which rose to my shoulders. From the deck, looking directly downwards, I had thought this dull-green growth a short, wiry grass, and, of course, in its relative proportion to the gigantic women, it was no higher than ordinary grass to a normal human being. It was

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a wonderful example of the theory of relativity, but my mind was not interested in scientific matters at the time, and I merely gave thanks that the miniature jungle,—which I saw was composed of giant lichens—would afford me cover through which I might sneak in safety, and with little chance of detection.

"Without much difficulty I made my way to the other vessel, and found her even more dissected than I had supposed. Why the denizens of the place had torn her to bits I did not then know, but certain portions of her machinery and fittings had been left intact, and, as I examined these, I made another and most astounding discovery. Deeply engraved upon a brass plate was the ship's name '*U. S. S. Cyclops!*' For a space I stood staring, scarcely able to believe my eyes. Here then was the solution to that mystery of the sea, the disappearance of the collier, as laden with manganese, she vanished without word or trace when off the Barbados during the World War. No doubt, I thought, many a mystery of the sea had been caused by the damnable work of these beings with their infernal machine. But why, for what reason, did they capture ships? Why did they carry off the unconscious persons upon the vessels? And why did they tear the vessels apart? It was all a mystery which, in all its horrible, gruesome, ghoulish details I was soon to solve.

"There was nothing more to be learned from the remains of the *Cyclops*, and in safety I returned to the *Chiriqui* to find, to my surprise and terror, that a gang of the monstrous females had boarded the ship in my absence and were stripping her of everything. But as they caught sight of me, all threw down whatever they had and fled precipitately, leaving me once more in undisputed possession of the ship. I was relieved at this, for it was obvious that I had no need to fear the creatures. By now, too, I had formulated a theory to account for this strange dread of a being who was a puny, miserable thing compared to them. Unquestionably my gas-mask rendered me a most grotesque and unknown creature in their eyes. My remaining alive and active while all others upon the ship had succumbed to the noxious gas had probably caused them to think that I was a supernatural being. The fact that I could go about and breathe the sulphur-laden air would cause them to regard me with even greater wonder and superstition, and, as I found later, the fact that I was never seen to eat, confirmed their belief that I was some mysterious being against whom their gases and their deviltries were of no avail.

"I had not much time to devote to such matters, however. Soon after regaining the *Chiriqui* I heard excited cries from the land, and looking over the ship's rails, I found an immense crowd had gathered near the empty cradle of the airship, and that all were gazing upward. Following their example, I stared into the greenish void and instantly understood. Descending rapidly towards the plain, came the great sphere, and, suspended below it, was the hull of another captive ship. And as I focussed my glasses upon this, I rubbed my eyes and gaped. The dull gray color, the lines, the raking funnels, the

barbettes and gun muzzles left no room for doubt. Incredible as it seemed, the captive vessel was a warship! What hope then had my fellow men upon earth? What chance was there if these giant creatures could send forth their flaming machine, and by it, capture the fastest, most powerful war-vessels—all within the space of a few hours?

"Rapidly the machine and its burden approached, and presently descended gently dropping the war vessel close to the *Chiriqui*. My worst fears were confirmed. The vessel was an American destroyer, the *McCracken*, and I knew that scores of my countrymen must lie unconscious upon her, and in a few moments would be carried off to some unknown horrible fate. What that fate was I had already surmised. That first demonstration of the ferocious cannibalism of the giantesses upon the *Chiriqui*'s deck had been enough to make my blood run cold.

"But I had not yet guessed even a fraction of the true horror of it. Scarcely had the *McCracken* been dropped upon the earth, when the women swarmed upon her, and once more I saw the creatures gathering the inert forms of men and carrying them to the city. And rapidly, too, they commenced dismantling and tearing the destroyer into bits. How they had accomplished this with the *Cyclops* had puzzled me, but now I witnessed the process close at hand. From the vicinity of the waterfall, lines or pipes were led to the vessel's side; presently there was the roaring sound of steam; dense clouds of vapor arose from the cataract; the water ceased to flow, and from the extremities of the lines or tubes twenty-foot jets of blinding flame shot out. As easily as though made of wax, the steel sides, the massive beams, the armored barbettes of the warship melted and were cut by these jets, and as the pieces fell apart, the spherical airship took a position above the vessel, and by its magnetic power, lifted tons of the fragments, then sailing off, deposited them in some spot beyond the city. It was then, as I saw the ship rapidly dissolving before my eyes, that the inspiration came to me which may make it possible for me to communicate with the outside world and may, if God wills, serve to warn my fellow men of the fate which will overtake them if these terrible creatures are allowed to follow out their plans. As the jets of flame cut through the *McCracken*'s superstructure, and the radio antennae fell in a tangled mass across the deck, I forgot all else and rushed to the wireless room of the *Chiriqui*. Here was my chance. If the ship's radio transmitter was still in working order; if the auxiliary battery was still charged, I might send out messages which, small as the chances were, might reach the ears of some of the countless thousands of persons who listened each night at their receiving sets. I trembled with fear that I would find the transmitter injured or dismantled. I shook with dread that the battery might be dead. I felt faint with apprehension that the message, if sent, might never penetrate the sulphur-laden atmosphere or might never reach the outer world. And I realized, with a sickening sinking of my heart, that even if heard my communication might be regarded as a hoax, and no attention would be given it. But I would do my best. The radio set had

not been molested. Everything was in working order, and I set myself the task of transmitting my story each night at the same hour, repeating it over and over again, until the storage batteries are exhausted, for to get up steam and start the dynamos is beyond my powers. Had I knowledge of Morse I would send my story by that code, but I have not, and so—I must cease. For the love of your race and of your dear ones listen, I beseech you, until I can resume."

HERE the message broke off abruptly, and Frank and I sat staring at each other, fearing to speak lest we might interrupt or miss the words which might come, and listening with straining ears at the head-sets. For an hour we sat there and then, once more the voice spoke.

"The doom that I feared is approaching. I have been here for three months and this will, I know, be my final message. Oh that I could only be sure that someone has heard my words, that my fate has not been in vain but has served to warn my fellow beings. But I must hurry on. I have learned everything of importance. I have watched, studied and have even learned to understand much of the language of these beings. I found that there were men. They are puny beings compared to the women, though ten-foot giants compared to normal men, and they are cowed, abject, mere slaves of the females. Only enough male children are permitted to survive to propagate the race. All others are killed.

"As they reach manhood only those males of super-intelligence, strength and virility are permitted to live. The others are destroyed and—yes, horrible as it sounds, their bodies, like those of the murdered infants and of the aged, sick or infirm, are devoured. And as fast as the males attain middle age their lives are forfeited. Long ago these beings subsisted upon the few wild creatures which roamed their land; but long ago all these were exhausted and human flesh became the only meat. There is no vegetable food, and for a time the sacrificed surplus males, and the aged, provided food for the race. But gradually the male births decreased, female children preponderated, and with the increased population resulting, the males were too few to nourish the others. Then, through what damnable accident or design I do not know, the creatures went forth in their airship and discovered the teeming millions of human beings on earth.

"But the bulk of humanity was and still is safe from them, at least until new means of attacking mankind are devised, for the globular airship cannot approach the land. The very power it uses to lift the greatest steamships and carry them off, draws the machine to the earth and holds it fast. But above water, which acts as an insulator apparently, the apparatus can operate at will. And they have a twofold purpose in capturing ships. All the available metal in this land was exhausted in constructing two of the spherical machines. One of these never returned from its first trip, and only the one remains. To construct more, these giant women plan to use the metal salvaged from captured ships, until a vast fleet of the infernal things is

ready to go forth and wipe the seas clean of ships and human beings. And the bodies of the men and women, struck down by the gas, are to serve as food for these demons in human form.

"This is the most horrible, blood-curdling thing of all. Rendered unconscious by the gas, the victims remain in a state of suspended animation indefinitely, exactly as do grubs, spiders and insects when stung by certain species of wasps and placed in their nests to provide food for their young. Stacked in great storage vaults these breathing, living, but paralyzed human beings are kept, and as needed, are taken out.

"Already they have a supply on hand sufficient to last them for over a year. Some of the *Cyclops'* company are still preserved; there are over three hundred from the *Chiriqui*, hundreds from other ships, and the entire crew of the *McCracken*.

"All these things I learned little by little, and mainly through a friend, for marvelous as it may seem, I have a friend—if friend he can be called, miserable, trembling, terrified male, who, doomed to death, sought to escape his fate and sought refuge with me, dreading my presence less than his doom, and hoping that such a feared and almost reverenced being as myself might protect him. For two months he has been my companion, but he cannot eat anything but meat and the supply of meat upon the ship is getting low, and sooner or later he must succumb. And the women, maddened at his escape from their clutches, though not yet daring to approach too closely to me, are getting bolder. Some time, at some unguarded moment, they will find the poor fellow alone and will fall upon him. And in his terror, in an effort to buy his life, he will, I know, reveal to them that I am but an ordinary mortal, a man who eats and drinks and who survived the gas by mechanical and not supernatural means. But I will not be taken alive by these fearful female cannibals. When the time comes, as I know it will, I will blow my brains out, and though they may devour my body they will not rend me alive. No more ships have been brought in here since the *McCracken* was captured. But this I know is due to the fact that all the energies of these creatures are being devoted to building additional air machines. This work goes on in a vast cavern beyond the city where tremendous forces, furnaces with heat beyond human conception and machines of which we know nothing, are controlled by the internal steam, the radiant energy and the magnetic powers of the earth's core.

"And now, again let me implore any and all who may hear my words to give close attention to what I say, for here again is a means by which humanity may combat and destroy these ghastly, gigantic cannibals. The spherical air-machines are helpless from above. Their magnetic or electrical forces extend only downwards. The gasses they throw out are heavier than air and descend but cannot ascend, and by means of swift planes, huge bombs and machine guns, the things can be easily destroyed. And they cannot travel without throwing off the dazzling green light. Only when motionless are they dark. And so they will offer easy marks and can be readily detected. So, I beseech you

who may hear, that the governments are notified and warned and that a fleet or many fleets of airplanes properly equipped patrol the seas, and at first sight of one of the green meteors rise above it and utterly destroy it without mercy.

"Wait! I hear a terrified scream. . . . I am back again at the transmitter. It was the fellow who has been with me. Poor devil! He has met his fate, but after all it was the custom of his people, and, moreover, he would have starved to death in a few days. For that matter I, too, face starvation. The ship's stock is running low; all the food upon the *McCracken* was destroyed in cutting up that vessel, and unless another ship is cap-

tured I will have no food after two weeks more. What a strange thought! How terrible an idea! That the awful fate of hundreds of my fellows would be my salvation! But I will never live to die from hunger. I can hear the terrible screams of my late companion on the deck outside. God! It is the end! The fellow must have told the enraged females. His body has been torn to shreds. With bloody hands and reeking lips they are rushing towards the upper deck where I sit. They are here! This is my last word! God grant that I have been heard! I am about to——"

Crashing in our ears came the report of a pistol.

THE END.

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- "The Man in the Iron Mask," By Edwin Balmer and William B. MacHarg.
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## NEXT MONTH

# "The War of the Worlds"

By H. G. WELLS

THIRD HONORABLE MENTION IN THE \$500 PRIZE COVER CONTEST

Awarded to William H. Christie, 1949 Crescent Road, Foul Bay, Victoria, B. C., Canada, for "The Lost Continent."



The Doctor released the machine from his grasp and there it remained, spinning like a little world in space.

# The LOST CONTINENT

## By Cecil B. White

### CHAPTER I



HE name of Doctor Joseph Lamont is so well known to the public that it is hardly necessary to introduce him. The startling advances which have recently been made in liberating the energy of the atom and the still more remarkable feat of the actual creation of matter from energy are, as nearly everyone knows, due to his untiring efforts.

Five years ago I had the good fortune of being selected to fill a vacancy in his small staff. A few months previously I had graduated with honors in physics at Chicago. Evidently he had been

impressed with the new methods I had developed in my line of attack on the problem of atomic structure, for after the appearance of my paper in the *Journal of Physical Science*, which resulted from these investigations, I received a short note requesting me to call upon him at my earliest convenience.

The outcome of my visit was that I was elected to fill a position which I had not even dared to hope for.

About two years ago he requested me to come into his office, asking me to bring Harvey, another member of the staff, in with me. This was an unusual occurrence, for we were generally given our instructions in type-written form by his sec-

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*THIS story, which has been awarded Third Honorable Mention, is particularly interesting because it was written by a prominent astronomer and embodies some very interesting bits of real science. Of all the prize-winning stories submitted, this one certainly contains the best science. It contains quite a good deal of unusual thoughts on the Fourth Dimension. Furthermore, if you wish to have a good insight into the Einstein Theory, in a manner that will be easy to understand by laymen, here is your chance to get a pleasant and palatable dose of it. The idea of bringing the lost Atlantis into the realm of the story we consider a happy thought. Certainly the author made the most of it in his original and really ingenious manner.*

---

retary, and our reports were dictated to the secretary every day so that it was seldom necessary for any of us to enter his office. Something unusual was evidently in the wind.

As soon as Harvey could leave the apparatus he was using we hurried down the corridor which led to the doctor's office. ("The Doctor" was the name we usually gave him when talking of him among ourselves.) On entering the office we found him toying with a strange looking bit of apparatus which was set up on his desk. He motioned to us to be seated, passed his cigarette case, and when we had both lighted our cigarettes, said, "I want both you men to look over a couple of things I have just completed—this," pointing to the apparatus on his desk, "and this," taking a spherical object out of a drawer.

Leaning back in his chair, he commenced: "I suppose you both remember Merton's paper which appeared in the *Mathematical Journal* some time ago. In this paper he claimed, and apparently substantiated his claims, that time is actually another dimension, not merely a mathematical one. Well, after carefully studying this paper I became convinced that, with the knowledge we now possess, it would be possible to construct a piece of apparatus which would distort the space-time coordinates, if I may express it that way. The distortion of these coordinates would allow any object within the distorted area to slip back through time."

"After all, there is really nothing very strange in looking into the past, due to the finite velocity of light. Every day of our lives we see things that have happened in the past, for we never see anything as it really is, but as it was when the light that reaches our eye left it. Thus we see the moon as it was one and a quarter seconds ago; the sun as it was eight and a third minutes ago and the stars as they were years ago; hundreds of years or thousands of years, depending upon their distance.

"By maintaining the correct relationship between the forces generated by this machine, any object between these electrodes" pointing to pair of bell-shaped terminals connected with the instrument, "will slip back in time as far as the field reaches. The distance into time which can be penetrated depends upon the field-strength. On it being reduced, the body is allowed to slide forward in time until it reaches the present. If, however, the field is suddenly cut off, the object will remain in the past. I lost a perfectly good pair of pliers somewhere in bygone ages this morning when I made my first test of the machine. I suppose you would both like to see it in action?"

A bottle of mucilage was selected for the demonstration and was placed between the electrodes. On closing the switch a glass bulb, shaped somewhat like an X-ray tube but containing three elements from which wires led, through platinum seals, to the intricate wiring of the apparatus, lit up. A small graduated dial on the front panel of the machine was slowly turned under the doctor's fingers and, in a flash, the bottle and its contents disappeared. "That bottle," said the Doctor, "is, as near as I can figure out, some seventeen thousand years into the past."

"Then you can never recover it," said Harvey.

"Why not?" asked the Doctor.

"Because back there there will be nothing above the ground level to support it."

"That is correct," was the Doctor's reply, "but although the object has nothing to support it, it will remain in exactly the same position relative to the earth."

"Can you give me any reason for that?" said I.

"I confess I cannot, but nevertheless it must be so; look!" And with that the Doctor slowly turned back the dial and there stood the bottle before our startled gaze.

"Had I snapped off the current suddenly, then the bottle would have fallen. I believe," remarked our chief, "that is what must have happened to my pliers this morning, for I couldn't recover them although I sent back a powerful horse-shoe magnet, only a few seconds later. The magnet returned without the pliers."

Harvey looked at me and gave a puzzled laugh: "This is H. G. Wells' 'Time Machine'\* come to life and no mistake. Will it send things into the future, Dr. Lamont?"

"It will not," was his reply. "In Merton's equations for the space-time coordinates for the future you will find, as a factor of one of the terms, the symbol  $i$ ,<sup>t</sup> hence I do not believe it will ever be possible for us to explore the future."

"Then you intend to explore the past?" I asked.

"I do; and I intend to start the construction of my machine as soon as possible. But I haven't shown you this other thing yet."

I think Harvey as well as I had forgotten all about the spherical object, so interested were we in the other apparatus.

"No one knows just why a body falls to the earth when released, or why one body attracts another. We know what we call the constant of gravitation and we can explain the movements of bodies when subjected to this force, but of the nature of the force we know nothing. It may be some sort of electrical field set up by the presence of matter; and that is what I'm inclined to believe it is myself. Some months ago I made a startling discovery, from which has developed this object."

"This sphere consists, as you can see, of two hemispheres mounted upon a central shaft, or axis. They are so arranged that they turn in opposite directions at exactly the same rate, and, having equal moments of inertia, the axis on which they turn will remain stationary. Each hemisphere is covered with many thousands of turns of fine wire imbedded in an insulating medium which gives a smooth polished surface. The secret of the property of this sphere lies in the winding of the wire. One of those little atomic engines we made, serves as the power plant for the sphere; it is fastened to the coils and turns the hemispheres. It also generates the power which maintains the necessary potential difference across the windings of the sphere."

\*See AMAZING STORIES, May issue, p. 148.

<sup>t</sup>  $i$ , the square root of minus one that makes any real quantity operated on by it an imaginary quantity:  $i^2 = -1$ .

"Now, if I hold this sphere so that its axis is perpendicular to the earth's magnetic lines of force, a current would flow through the winding when the hemispheres were turned, were it not for the opposing e.m.f. set up by the generator. If the hemispheres are revolving with sufficient rapidity, and the current flowing through the wires is of the correct value, the earth's attraction for the sphere is exactly neutralized. With the correct ratio of speed to current, and these being greater than in the former case, the sphere will rise."

Here the Doctor arranged the sphere with its axis in the correct position, pressed a small knob on one of the extremities of the shaft, and the hemispheres immediately began to turn.

"I have adjusted the mechanism so that the force of gravity is exactly neutralized," our chief continued, "in a few seconds the hemispheres will be turning at some seven thousand, five hundred revolutions per minute, which is the requisite speed."

As he finished this sentence, the Doctor released the machine from his grasp and there it remained, spinning like a little world in space.

"Uncanny, is it not?" commented Harvey.

I agreed with him; it was decidedly uncanny to see an object weighing perhaps five or six pounds floating there above the desk like a child's balloon.

"You will notice that the thing's plane of rotation is practically unchangeable, due to the gyroscopic action of the rapidly rotating parts," the doctor continued, "hence, once the sphere is launched, it would take a tremendous expenditure of energy to alter such plane. This factor is going to prove exceedingly useful when the machine lands, for the supporting cradles need only to be correctly orientated. Then all the pilot has to do is to descend directly over a given point, when the sphere will fit snugly into her berth."

"How are you going to propel your craft," I asked the Doctor, "by air propellers?"

"No," he replied, "by a more efficient method. By ionizing the air in one direction or the other, there will be steady uniform thrust against the machine, which will propel it in the desired direction. For my ionizing medium I am going to use X-rays developed in quartz tubes. It is a good ionizing agent, and is much more simple to handle than other known methods. Now let us come down to business."

"I am going to start the construction of a sphere at once. I have here complete plans and specifications for the finished machine, and I want you two men to take complete charge of the work. I hate to do it, but I will have to set you a time limit for reasons I will explain to you later. The sphere *must* be completed within nine months. It is a difficult task, I know, but it can be done. Here, take these blue prints away with you and look the thing over."

We left the room with a backward glance at the sphere, still quietly spinning where the Doctor had released it. When the chief said that he wanted a thing done, no one who knew him stopped to argue; one went away and did it, for he never asked the impossible.

**Harvey and I went to work.**

## CHAPTER II

THREE weeks from the specified time the sphere was completed except for the fittings that would make the living quarters habitable. My readers will remember the accounts of the building of the sphere which appeared in the newspapers throughout the country, hence it will be unnecessary to repeat them here. As you know, the nature of the sphere was kept a close secret. Many wild guesses were made however, none of which came near the truth, the greater number favored some kind of new power generator, and indeed it did look somewhat like that as it lay in its cradle.

Built close to the great Pittsburgh steel works, so as to be near our source of supplies, the sphere dwarfed everything in the vicinity, as well it might, for its dimensions were truly colossal.

To the model we saw in the Doctor's office had been added a ring at the equator, if I may so call it, of the sphere. This ring, eighty-five feet wide, forty feet thick and six hundred feet inside diameter, was held in place by immense radial arms attached rigidly to the axis. It was cellular in structure, consisting of sixteen cells. In each of these cells was placed the individual high-frequency apparatus for each ionizing element which projected through the walls of its cell. These elements were hollow quartz rods tapering from a foot in diameter where they left their socket to six inches at their outer extremities, thirty feet away. The sockets in which they were set were of the same material, compact in form.

The making of these quartz pieces was a feat of engineering itself. No large quantities of this material had ever been shaped before, and it was only due to one of Harvey's inventions, the atomic flash furnace, that we were able to make them. In the "flash furnace" we disrupted the atoms of a certain element that was placed alongside the pure quartz fragments. The heat thus developed immediately fused the quartz and, while it was still plastic, it was formed into shape like so much white hot steel. A full description of the engineering difficulties and how they were overcome will be found, by those who are interested in this phase of the work, in *The Engineering Quarterly*.

The space in the cells not occupied by the exciting mechanism was adapted for stores, crew accommodation, etc. No windows or ports were provided, however, because of the harmful effects of the intense rays from the ionizers. Only in the pilot cabin, attached to the lowest cell, was any view from the sphere obtained, and there only through heavy lead-glass windows which absorbed all but the most intense of the rays.

Connecting gangways and passages, along with a series of small elevators, gave ready access to any part of the sphere. The engines which were to drive the hemispheres were the largest atomic engines that had yet been constructed and were distributed in two sets of three each geared directly to the hemispheres at their rim, so synchronized that each hemisphere turned at exactly the same rate.

In order that any alteration of the outside resistance to the motion of these two halves of the sphere

## AMAZING STORIES

might be compensated, a system of small water balance tanks was arranged so that the moment of inertia of the hemispheres might be changed if necessary in order that the ring might always remain stationary. These were controlled from the pilot cabin, whence the ionizers and generators for the current flowing through the wiring of the sphere were also regulated.

The trial trip of the sphere was made secretly one cold rainy morning, about two o'clock. Nearly all the members of the laboratory staff were pressed into service as the crew. Our chief mechanician acted as engineer with three assistants for his staff. Harvey, with another assistant, was in charge of the ray generators whilst the Doctor and I occupied the control cabin.

On the signal being given to the engineer, the great hemispheres slowly and smoothly began to revolve, gaining speed every second until within ten minutes they were spinning with the calculated velocity necessary to lift us when the current was sent through the many miles of wire covering them. The Doctor closed a switch that operated a relay and watched the ammeter before him.

"Unless my computations are wrong, we are rising," he said. It was too dark to see the ground below, but watching the barometer, I noticed a drop in the column.

"According to this we are up two hundred feet, but I didn't feel anything when we left the cradle," I replied.

"I didn't think we would," the Doctor retorted. "I purposely kept our acceleration small."

Now that we were well above the surrounding buildings, I could see the lights of the city dimly through the rain. Another look at the barometer showed we were rising rapidly and would soon be above the clouds.

"Let's get above this," said our pilot, "and let us see the stars for a change. I haven't seen them for weeks."

Increasing the speed and current very carefully, the Doctor added:

"Five thousand feet should take us out of the clouds." I watched the barometer and at four thousand feet peered through the glass.

"Open the window, the ray is not on," commanded the chief.

I obeyed. The air was cool, but fresh and invigorating. "That's the first good breath of fresh air I've had for a long time," I said, taking deep breaths. "There is our old friend Orion in the southeast, Sirius is just rising."

The Doctor came and stood beside me.

"I wonder how long it will be before we can break the bonds that hold us to this earth and visit some of our nearer neighbors in space," he said.

"I've often had day dreams of that occurrence," said I.

"Well, dreams sometimes come true," the Doctor remarked, "but we must get on with our tests. We must return in about an hour."

I closed the window and the Doctor returned to the control panel. A series of switches were closed one by one, and as each was closed, a dial beneath it was slowly turned. A speed indicator at the side

of the cabin slowly climbed its scale until it stood at eighty miles an hour.

"That will be enough for now," the Doctor said. "Until I am perfectly sure of myself, I don't want to take any risks."

For an hour we tested the sphere in every possible way, rising, falling, turning, until the Doctor was confident of his control. A faint flush in the eastern sky warned us that dawn was approaching and that it was time for us to return. Our every move had been recorded automatically on a chart attached to the wall, a little device of my own that enabled us to return to our starting place without hesitating. Slowly we sank until we saw the guiding lights of two assistants we had left behind. Then, without an appreciable jar, the great sphere rested once more in its cradle.

The motors were cut off and an inspection of the massive bearings of the hemispheres was at once made. They were as cool as when we left the cradle, thanks to the excellent workmanship of those that made them.

"A fine time I had of it," grumbled Harvey, good humoredly as we walked home to our rooms. "I didn't see or hear a thing except the sparking of the 'ray generators all the time we were aloft. Were we aloft, or are you pulling my leg?" he jocularly asked. "Next time we go up, I'm going to put a school boy in charge of the 'rays. There isn't a darn thing to do, and he can do that as well as I can."

The following days were employed by Harvey in installing the "time machine" as he insisted on calling it, while a gang of carpenters fitted up the cabins and sleeping quarters. In sixteen days after the trial trip, the sphere was fully conditioned and ready for the use to which the Doctor intended to put it. This part of the work was done in my absence, however, for the day after our trial trip, I packed my suit case and left for Europe, bent on another mission.

## CHAPTER III

**T**HREE weeks after the events just described I boarded the liner *Aurorian* at Southampton. She was about to sail on one of her popular round-the-world tours, carrying some nine hundred passengers. Of these more than half were members of the International Geographical Society, representatives of every civilized country, who had been elected by the members of the society to represent them at a conference which had recently been held in Paris. Following the conference, the majority of the delegates were taking advantage of the special program that had been arranged by the steamship company and the attractive rates which had been offered them. For that reason we found so many of them on board the *Aurorian*.

Some of my readers may remember the bitter controversy that was waged some years ago between Dr. Lamont's late brother, Professor Thomas Lamont, and the leaders of the I. G. S. Those who recall these events will remember that Professor Lamont claimed that his researches among Aztec ruins had led to the discovery of substantial evidence as to the truth of the legend of the lost conti-

nent, Atlantis. This evidence, in the form of objects of commerce and art, had been saved by the few survivors of the greatest disaster the human race has ever known, or had been left by them and their descendants as records of their age. Unhappily, these precious relics were lost in transit and no trace of them has ever been found, despite the expenditure of the professor's modest means in the vain attempt to recover them.

Perhaps rather unguardedly, the professor published a book in which he set forth his discoveries and claims, with the result that he was branded as a cheap "sensation monger." Not having his proofs to back his statements, the poor fellow was deeply humiliated. It was a heavy blow to him, his health was undermined by worry, and within a year of the publication of his book he passed away, dying, his friends believed, of a broken heart.

It was with the hope of vindicating his brother that the Doctor had built the sphere. The meeting of the society and the voyage to follow had been arranged long ahead of time; the Doctor, knowing these plans, after the invention of the sphere and its strange auxiliary, had decided to convince his brother's critics at one blow.

The first port of call of the *Auranian* was to be Vera Cruz whence the members of the society could proceed to view some of Mexico's most famous examples of early civilization. Before they reached this port, however, we were all to see sights that few men have dreamed of, including Atlantis itself. I was, of course, the Doctor's representative. Neither he nor any of the crew of the sphere would be able to see anything of the lost continent. I was to carefully record our experiences with both camera and pen. Tests with small animals and birds had shown that there was no danger attached to the experiment, and, with larger apparatus, the Doctor, Harvey and I had all made journeys into the past. But that is another story.

The voyage down channel and into the open Atlantic was uneventful. Five days after seeing the grey cliffs of Old England drop astern, we were sailing over the lost continent. I overheard several discussions of Professor Lamont and his book, and all were unanimous in deriding him. At the table, however, I found one supporter of our friend, the master of the *Auranian*. Captain Mathews was an enthusiastic amateur archaeologist and his own observations had led him to the conclusion that the legend of Atlantis was more than a mere myth. Of course, when he ventured to express his beliefs, he was gently laughed out of court by those in the salon.

The morning of the sixth day out dawned clear and calm. The old Atlantic was on her best behavior. This was my eighth trip across the "Herring Pond" and never had I seen such perfect weather. I took up a position near the radio cabin immediately after breakfast, after telling "Sparks" where I could be found. The Doctor had warned me to expect a message from him this day and I was more than anxious to receive it. The whole thing seemed so unreal.

About ten-thirty, ship's time, the operator handed

me a slip of paper. The message was brief—"About 2 P. M., Lamont"—it read.

One-thirty found me leaning over the starboard rail searching the northwestern horizon with a powerful pair of binoculars that I had borrowed from the first officer. A faint smudge of smoke in that quarter offered an excuse for my conduct to those that noticed me. Within a quarter of an hour I picked up a tiny speck, lost it, then picked it up again. In a minute it was decidedly larger. It was the sphere.

I could have shouted aloud in my delight, for although I had worked on the thing for eight months and had been in the control cabin on its trial trip, yet I could hardly realize that such a stupendous thing was a reality.

In a few minutes it was visible to the naked eye, traveling towards us at express speed. Soon others had noticed it, and before it was within ten miles of us, everyone on board knew of its presence and the decks were crowded with passengers eager to see the strange object.

Speeding along some five hundred feet above the sea it came, until it was abreast of us, about a mile away. Everyone was wildly excited and asking his neighbor questions. A few of them recognized it for what it was—Dr. Lamont's strange creation. Like magic the word passed and, I think, fear filled the hearts of a few when they knew that this machine was controlled by the man whose brother they had been instrumental in ruining. Perhaps thoughts of an insane revenge upon them entered their minds as they gazed on the colossal, spinning sphere.

As the sphere swung overhead, I ran up the steps to the bridge.

"Captain Mathews," I said, "will you please bring the ship to a stop? Dr. Lamont is in command of that sphere and he has a message for those on board."

The captain looked at me in surprise.

"I suppose we had better see what he wants," he remarked as he turned to the engine room telegraph.

I had donned a pair of tinted glasses and could look at the sphere without discomfort. Others, who were not so provided, found their eyes were hurt by the bluish glow of the ionizers, though few recognized the cause of their discomfort.

The familiar smell of ozone permeated the air, due to the rapid formation of free O, by the action of the rays.\*

A window in the pilot house opened and, protected by a heavy mask, a head appeared. Armed with a megaphone, the Doctor addressed the *Auranian*'s crowded decks.

"PASSENGERS of the *Auranian*," he began, "you are now directly above the lost continent of Atlantis which my brother, through his researches, showed to have existed before it was overwhelmed by the Atlantic, the ocean which bears its name. Among you there are many members of the society whose unsympathetic treatment was directly responsible for his death. I am here to vindicate him by showing you this once thriving and populous

\*Ozone is a molecule of oxygen containing three atoms, and is readily formed by ionization of the air.

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country, which lies beneath your feet, as it was in those days before the flood. Do not be alarmed. I assure you that no harm will come to any of you. I have here in my control a machine that will send you and the vessel that carries you back in time, and I am about to send you fourteen thousand years into the past, when you will see with your own eyes, that my brother, the late Professor Lamont, was right."

While he was speaking, the *Auranian* had been gradually losing way, until now she remained motionless on the glassy sea. The Doctor withdrew his head and a moment later the rays were cut off.

Two heavy cables terminating in broad, bell-shaped electrodes, were now unwound from drums situated in the extremities of the axis, where the electrodes were snugly held when not in use. A hundred feet or so above the water they stopped; one on the port bow, the other on the starboard quarter.

I knew what to expect and looked at the sun. Suddenly it shot eastward and disappeared, only to reappear again in the west as a streak. Night had passed like the wink of an eye. The streak marking the sun's course wavered with growing rapidity until it became a band of light forty-seven degrees wide. The sea was a cloudy mass. Then suddenly, I caught glimpses of a rugged landscape below. Again I glanced at the sky, the wavering streak reappeared, darkness, a flash, and then the sun was shining in its accustomed manner, except that now it was further in the west. By it, I judged the time to be about five o'clock.

There, above our heads, hung the sphere. The electrodes were glowing with a soft purplish discharge, similar to the cathode glow of a discharge tube. The effect of this strange transition upon the passengers of the *Auranian* may better be imagined than described. Their first fear was that they would be precipitated upon the rugged cliffs below. Then nameless fears took hold of them.

I did my best to alleviate these fears by walking rapidly among them, telling them that I and others had undergone the same thing several times before and to take advantage of the opportunity afforded them of seeing a country that had existed before the dawn of the Pharaohs. Little by little their fears subsided, until the more courageous began to take note of their surroundings. I remember one red-haired, freckle-faced boy dashing madly for the boat deck. I thought he was panic-stricken and I seized him.

"Let me go, mister," he panted, "I want to get a grandstand seat for this show."

This little episode relieved the tension of those about us and a laugh went up.

"The laddle is right," a burly individual remarked: "where are my glasses?"

This started a general scramble for points of vantage and I hurried to the bridge, where I met Captain Mathews.

"This is a strange business," said he. "I suppose I'm not dreaming by any chance?"

"No, not unless we all are," I replied.

"Is there no danger of the ship falling," he asked.

"None at all, Captain. I've been in the same position before," I answered.

Thus assured, he turned to the wheel house for his binoculars, while I turned to the examination of the country below us.

We had come to rest over the eastern cliff of a miniature Grand Canyon, into which flowed two rivers from opposite points of the compass. The thunder of their fall as they crashed into the gorge below us filled the air with the noise. Cut off from the rays of the westerning sun, the bottom of the abyss was lost in shadow so that the outlet for these two streams was hidden from us. I am inclined to think that they drained into some subterranean outlet for there was no visible gap in the confining walls.

Crowning each precipitous slope were magnificent temple-like structures which might have served as the inspiration of the glorious architecture of ancient Greece. As far as I could make out with my glasses, they were carved out of the living rock, the slopes of which had been in most cases, at least, carefully smoothed by the hand of man.

Miles of verdant pasture and waving grasses, which I took to be corn, covered the plateau which was rent by the canyon, and here and there I could discern moving objects, cattle in the fields.

"Look over there to the south," said the captain, who had come to my side. "There are some of the Atlantians themselves."

Sure enough, I could see with my glasses a small group of the inhabitants of this weird city. Save for what appeared to be a feather head-dress they were without ornament or clothing. This article was bound about the forehead, passing over the shoulders and down to the forearms, where it appeared to be fastened.

"I wonder," remarked my companion, "if that is the origin of the feathered head-dress of our American Indians. The survivors of this continent may have carried and introduced the custom to that country."

"It seems quite likely," said I. "You will remember that one of Professor Lamont's drawings, taken from a chased silver tray, showed a figure arrayed as these are."

"Do you notice," he continued, "that these people seem to show no fear at our appearance?"

"Yes, I do," I replied. "I wonder if it is possible that they have learned the lesson we have yet to learn; that is, not to allow superstition to enshroud that which we do not understand or cannot explain."

"Superstition is the basis of a lot of our unnecessary fears," he remarked. The Atlantians, as the captain had called them, were, from what I could see of them, a splendid race. Tall and lithe, with strong chiseled features, any one of those I saw might have posed for a Grecian statue. The only sign of emotion of the group on the cliff was shown by a tall kingly-looking man who, standing erect, with arms extended, gazed in our direction with a look of admiration upon his fine face. Perhaps to him, although our appearance was a mystery he could not solve, we appeared as an object of art, worthy of admiration. What is more beautiful than the clean cut lines of a greyhound of the sea!

That art to them was part of their daily life could be seen on every hand. Their buildings over whose roofs we were suspended showed in every line and column a high artistic standard. The broad paved roads over the countryside, lined with delicate palm-like trees, the smoothing of the walls of their cliff-like dwellings, their own figures and artistic head-dress, all pointed to a highly artistic temperament.

By this time the colonnaded summits of their towers were alive with people, all of the same fine type as those I have just described, surprise and excitement was written on many of their faces but nowhere did I see an expression of fear. Can it be that these people of bygone ages were devoid of it?

A low musical murmur from the crowds welled up to us above the roar of the cataracts. Turning my glasses on the nearest group, I saw a couple of men joyously, it seemed to me, discussing our vessel, for I could see by the motions of their hands that the symmetry of the sphere and ship was what excited their admiration.

Time was rapidly passing and I had yet to obtain my photographs. Taking out my camera, I set it up on its tripod, for time exposures were necessary with the powerful telephone lens I was using.

"I was so interested in this scene that I never thought of that," exclaimed Captain Mathews. "I'll get mine, too."

By the time he returned, I was busy making a series of exposures of the surrounding country and the strange city on special color process films. The captain was soon engaged with his camera also.

"I'm rather proud of my collection of photographs," he chuckled, "as is Captain Hughes of the Blue Star Line of his. Won't he turn green with envy when I show him these? He was so proud of the pictures he got of Mauna Loa in eruption, too."

The sun was close to the horizon before I finished. "How long is Doctor Lamont going to keep us here?" the skipper asked.

"Not much longer," I answered, "for the tubes which excite these electrodes get dangerously hot in a couple of hours. That is the limit of the time during which we can be kept here. Dr. Lamont is working on a new tube which will not overheat, but he had not completed it when the sphere left Pittsburgh. I hope we can remain until dark, for I would like to make some observations of the stars."

"By Jove, yes," exclaimed the skipper, "the procession of the equinox should put the constellations out of their seasons by six months."

"Nearly six months and twenty days," I replied.

"From a shot I made at the sun while you were busy with your camera, I should say that we are near the summer solstice," said he.

I busied myself with pencil and paper.

"If that is so, then we should see Orion in the southeast and have Vega near the pole," I observed.

"That will be about it," he mused. "I wouldn't like to navigate this ship now with all my ten-day stars out of place by hours, and no direction finding apparatus to assist me."

The sun was sinking behind a range of low hills to the west as he spoke. Twinkling lights appeared

in the city below while faint music rose out of the dusk.

"Do you hear that?" asked Captain Mathews. "Does not that remind you of Massenet's 'Elegy'?"

"It certainly does," I replied. "There is a strange resemblance in parts of it. We were right when we credited these people with a highly artistic development. What a loss to the world the sinking of this continent has been. Had that not occurred, our civilization might have been greatly in advance—thousands of years in all probability—of what it is now."

**T**HIE music ceased, and again we heard the soft murmur of the people below, though now we could see nothing of them in the shades of evening. The liner was brilliantly illuminated and that must have been the new attraction. The stars were appearing as night closed around and, sure enough, there was Orion where we had expected it whilst Vega occupied the position where we were accustomed to see Polaris. I thought I could detect a slight change in the relative positions of the stars in Orion and was certain that Vega had moved considerably with reference to the four other bright stars in Lyra.

Here is an opportunity, I thought, for an astronomer to obtain excellent proper motion data. An observatory equipped with a meridian circle could obtain a wealth of information, if it could be sent back through time several thousand years. I must propose that to the Doctor.

I was aroused from my reverie by the captain.

"Look at those electrodes!" he exclaimed.

The glow which surrounded them seemed to be slowly creeping up the cable. Without any warning the sun appeared in the east and streaked across the sky.

"We are going forward," I said to my companion. "Evidently the tubes would not stand much more and the Doctor is reducing the strength of the field."

In spite of the reduction, the glow on the cables continued to increase, rapidly mounting to the sphere itself and, just as we reached our normal place in time, the huge machine was enveloped in a bluish haze and vanished.

"What has happened?" Captain Mathews inquired.

"Something has gone wrong," said I. "The machine itself must have slipped into time."

He probably noticed my worried look and the nervousness I felt.

"Is there any danger?"

"None for us. We are back again in our own time, but for those on board the sphere, I'm not so sure. If they have slipped into the past, I'm afraid they cannot return, for the present will be their future and the machine will not travel into the future."

"But it was with us when we were back there," said the skipper, waving his hand in the direction of the lost city.

"Yes, it appeared to be," I explained, "but if you had been here in the present when the ship was in the past, you would have seen it too."

"This is too much for me," grunted the skipper.

"And for me, I don't hesitate to admit," said I.

"Can we do anything?" asked the captain.

"Not a thing just now. All I can do is to get back home as soon as possible and organize a rescue party," I replied.

For the remainder of the voyage, the passengers of the *Aurorian* had plenty to talk about. Discussions as to the correct interpretations of what they had seen waxed hot, but all were now with one accord sure that they had been in serious error over Professor Lamont's work.

Accounts of the strangest voyage ever made by a vessel were sent to the four corners of the earth, by radio, and none hesitated to give Professor La-

mont the appreciation he deserved. "A man's worth is not known until he is dead" is a true saying.

As soon as I could, I returned to the laboratory and set to work to organize relief expedition. The equipment is complete and in a few days we leave. That we will return with Dr. Lamont and his companions or not at all, is my belief. Before leaving, however, I have penned these lines so that the whole story of the building and loss of the sphere might be complete. Other accounts of our strange visit to Atlantis will be found published by members of the I. G. S., Captain Mathews, and others, to which I can refer my readers. You have read my account of our visit to the Lost Continent; now wish me luck in my venture to bring back the lost ones.

THE END.

## Readers' Vote of Preference

### Stories I Like

### Remarks

- (1) .....  
 (2) .....  
 (3) .....

### Stories I Do Not Like: Why

- (1) .....  
 (2) .....

*Had I been one of the judges on the Awarding Committee, the following would have been the order of my honorable mentions for the contest stories, written around the cover illustration of the December, 1926, issue of AMAZING STORIES:*

*First Honorable Mention* .....

*Second Honorable Mention* .....

*Third Honorable Mention* .....

*Fourth Honorable Mention* .....

*Do you want the questionnaire box to continue?* .....

*Do you like the illustrations as we have them now?* .....

*Do you favor more illustrations than we have now?* .....

*Would you rather not have any illustrations at all?* .....

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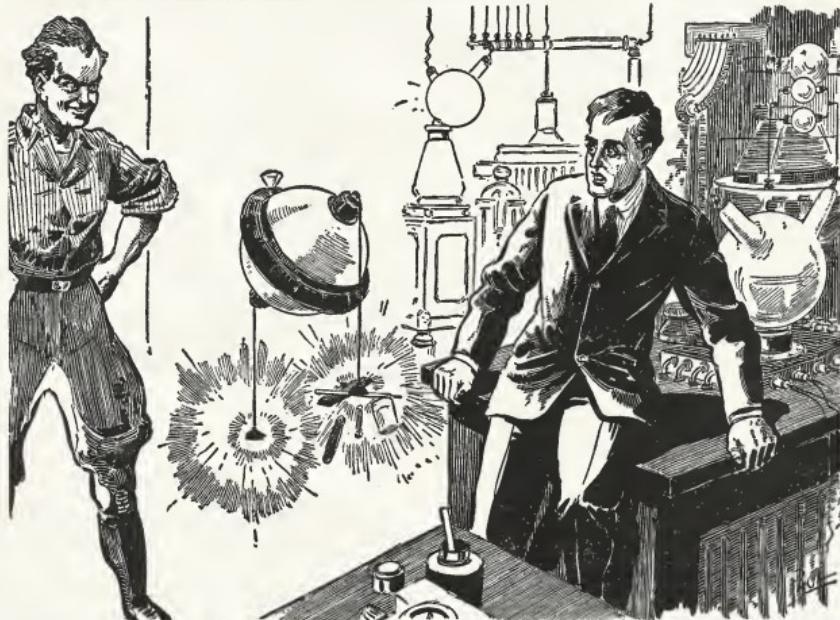
The publishers need a quantity of back numbers of AMAZING STORIES for April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December, 1926.

If you have copies of these issues, will you please be good enough to get in touch with us?

It would be appreciated.

THE PUBLISHERS.

FOURTH HONORABLE MENTION IN THE \$500 PRIZE COVER CONTEST  
Awarded to D. B. McRae, 392 E Street, San Bernardino, California, for "The Gravitomobile."



He placed a piece of copper on the bench where the tweezers had lain. When he released it, it flew to join the tweezers. Then a piece of rubber, a lead pencil, some silver coins, and finally, a glass stopper from a nearby bottle leaped to the knob when they were brought near.

# The GRAVITOMOBILE

## By D. B. McRae

**G**E ancient little engine slowly and laboriously grunted its way over the rusty rails and finally came to a halt by the side of a lonesome shack. At one end of the decrepit building there dangled a weather-beaten sign with the words, "El Centro," still faintly legible.

Surely this could not be the place where I was to meet my old friend Harry Teasdale. I glanced at the letter he had written me. Yes, it certainly said "El Centro," and it further assured me that he would meet me there. I descended from the old caboose which this Mexican railroad was

pleased to call their passenger car, seated myself on a bench which looked as though it might collapse at any moment, and prepared to await my friend's arrival. As the train pulled out, the conductor gazed pityingly in my direction, as though

somewhat in doubt as to the sanity of any one who would stop in that forsaken place.

*THIS time the illustration on the December, 1926, cover, furnishes the author a chance to work out, mathematically, some very ingenious ideas on gravitation. The last theories of the structure of the atom are used in a most entertaining manner in the development of a dramatic story. You will not only enjoy this story, but its O. Henry ending will probably leave you nonplussed for the time being. All in all, it is really a good yarn, with a "different" treatment.*

years ago, but I had soon fallen by the wayside, mathematics being the chief cause of my downfall. I had flunked so many "exams" that the

"exit committee" had finally informed me that my absence would be an asset to the university.

Harry, on the other hand, simply ate up all the "math" they could feed him, and in his second year had astonished his professors and classmates by putting on the blackboard a solution to a problem which had been given to the class as an example of a type of the unsolvable.

Physics and chemistry had fascinated him to such an extent that he barely succeeded in making passing grades in some of his other subjects. In spite of his brilliancy, however, he was not a favorite with the professors. He had a most annoying habit of talking about his own ideas when called upon to recite in class, and was not averse to pointing out defects in an instructor's reasoning processes when he noticed them. The fact that he was as likely to raise a question on a point of this kind in the classroom as in private, did not add to his popularity with the faculty.

In the laboratory he annoyed them by neglecting his work to carry on private experiments and by using methods of his own, in preference to following their directions.

Though most of the professors disliked him for these reasons, they could not find sufficient excuse for getting rid of him. He always succeeded in getting his assignments finished before the allotted time, and even when hurried through at the last moment his work was invariably correct.

Finally he was given his doctor's degree, partly because of some researches he had published which the faculty had discounted, but which had finally reflected credit upon the school; partly, no doubt, because it was the best way to get him out of the way. Several concerns had offered him good positions as chemist, but he had rejected them all.

"Too much routine," he said. "I can't see any fun in hanging around a laboratory all day stirring some stuff in a beaker in a way that any numbskull could learn to imitate in a day or so."

Shortly afterward he had disappeared, and I had heard nothing of him for several years.

Then one night while dining with Bill Weston, another classmate who had become a traveling salesman for a mining machinery concern, the talk had drifted into a discussion of what had become of some of our old friends.

"By the way," Bill said, "I ran across Harry Teasdale while I was on my last trip through Mexico."

"Mexico!" I ejaculated, "What on earth is he doing down there?"

"Operating a mine—a pretty good piece of property, too. I sold him a big order of machinery and supplies. Seems to be getting along fine."

I spilled a spoonful of soup down the front of my best dinner coat. I couldn't imagine Harry as a miner. He fitted more naturally into a world of dreams and theories than into a practical world of dollar chasers.

Curiosity led me to write him at the address Bill gave me. In an immediate reply I was cordially invited to come down and pay him a visit. I had accepted the invitation, and now here I was staring out over the dreary landscape.

An hour had passed and I was feeling thoroughly disgusted with myself for wasting a good deal of time and money purely to satisfy my curiosity. If the train had come back then, I should, no doubt, have gone home again. If I could only have obtained a glimpse into what the near future held for me, I would never have waited for the train—I would have walked back, but I had no inkling of coming events and I waited.

"YOU are Mr. Albert Fisher?" a pleasant voice from behind me asked.

Startled, I whirled around to find the owner of the voice, a tall blond young man of about twenty-five.

"Doctor Teasdale couldn't leave this morning, so he sent me to meet you and bring you over. I'm Pete Nelson, one of his assistants," he stated.

He led me over to a racy-looking roadster which he had driven up unnoticed, while I had been absorbed in my thoughts. We climbed in and Pete stepped on the gas. He proved to be an excellent driver. The road was quite rocky in spots but he showed an almost uncanny skill in missing the bumps. I tried in vain to lead him into conversation.

We stopped in front of a long low building, which looked as though it might be an office or a laboratory. There were other buildings scattered about, which I decided must be mine buildings.

"Doctor Teasdale is in his office, I think." Pete informed me, leading the way toward the front door of the building.

Before we could enter, the door was pulled open and I found myself shaking hands vigorously with my old friend.

"Well, Al, it seems like old times to see you again," he said. "How are you?"

Then before I could answer he added that I was just in time for dinner, and had better go and wash up a little.

The dinner was excellent but I was so interested in my host and his story of how he had happened to become a mining man that I did not pay much attention to the food.

After leaving college, he had drifted around for some time trying to find some way of making enough money to equip a private laboratory where he could do research work according to his own ideas. One day an old prospector had shown him some lumps of a peculiar yellow earthy material which Harry had analyzed and found to have a large radium content. They had become partners and Harry had discovered a method of extracting the radium at a fraction of the cost of the old process. As a result they had become wealthy. Then the old man died, leaving his interest in the mine to Harry.

As a result Harry had been able to carry out his old dream of establishing a research laboratory of his own. Thanks to the income from the mine he could carry on his experiments without being bothered by the question of finances.

"But perhaps you would rather see it than listen to my talk about it," he said as he led me toward the back part of the building.

"I would be interested in doing both," I replied. As we stepped inside the door I was astonished to see what he had accomplished. An immense room was filled with every imaginable kind of apparatus, and a good many kinds that I should never have been able to imagine. There were huge glass bulbs of curious shapes, some with liquids bubbling in them, others glowing with strange lights as though some sort of electrical discharge were passing through them.

Several men were busily at work in different parts of the room. For the most part they seemed to be young men, but every one of them appeared to be intensely interested in what he was doing.

"These young men you see here are, in a way, my students. Because my methods and apparatus are considerably different from those used in the colleges and in other laboratories, I have found it necessary to train my workers in my own laboratory. Some of these men I have picked from the colleges. In fact, I make it a point to learn of those college students who have shown exceptional ability along lines that would be useful in my work. Quite a few of these men, however, I have trained entirely in my own laboratory, and I have found that by eliminating the many non-essentials that fill up the college curriculum, they are able to make exceptionally rapid progress."

While speaking, Harry had led me over to a window, from which I got a view of a number of smaller buildings.

"Those are private laboratories provided for some of my advanced workers," he said, "I have men working in almost every branch of science, chemistry, physics, geology, and many other lines," he went on to explain. "I don't believe that any university has better equipment than we have right here, thanks to the mine."

#### A Discovery

**H**E led me into another room filled with apparatus still more complex than that I had seen thus far. Huge machines which seemed to be of an electrical nature lined one wall, while on benches running back and forth through the room stood a bewildering array of apparatus which I cannot even begin to describe.

"I want to show you my latest discovery," he said, as we paused before a curious looking bulb. It was about a foot in diameter, and was made of some material which looked very much like glass, yet had an odd, translucent appearance such as one sees in a thick piece of celluloid. On top of the bulb was a peculiar sort of funnel leading into the interior of the device. On each side of the funnel an electric wire led in. At one end, if a sphere can be said to have an end, a short metal rod extended out from the bulb and ended in a knob.

Harry closed a switch and the bulb began to glow with a strange greenish light. Then he picked up a bottle of a metallic-looking powder and poured a few grains into the funnel on top of the tube.

A pair of tweezers which had been lying on the bench immediately leaped up and clung to the knob on the end of the metal rod. Harry looked at me. Some comment was evidently expected.

"Some new way of developing magnetism?" I ventured.

"Not exactly," he replied. "What would you say about this?"

He placed a piece of copper on the bench where the tweezers had lain. When he released it, it flew to join the tweezers. Then a piece of rubber, a lead pencil, some silver coins, and finally, a glass stopper from nearby bottle leaped to the knob when they were brought near.

I could only stare at the miscellaneous collection of objects adhering to the knob. I wasn't quite sure that it wasn't some conjuring trick performed for my benefit.

"Albert, I have discovered the secret of gravitation!" Harry said, as he turned off the current and the objects dropped.

"Gravitation!" I exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that you were neutralizing gravity when you made all those things jump around just now?"

"Well, it could hardly be called neutralization," he replied. "That is an unfortunate error into which a great many people, even among scientists, have fallen. They have assumed that the proper way to approach the problem of gravitation was to attempt to find some means of neutralizing the attractive force.

"The neutralization of the force is an important and interesting phase of the problem," he went on. "But I decided long ago that it was not the proper method of approach if we expected to find out anything about the nature of gravitation. If we once discovered the nature of the force, then it would be a simple matter to devise means of controlling or directing or even of neutralizing it."

"You have discovered what the force is," I queried.

"Yes, it is a vibration in the ether having an extremely short wave length, far shorter than any other radiation known, either of light or X-rays. In fact, no ordinary apparatus can detect them."

"How did you discover them?"

"I had been considering the various theories that had been propounded, and found that none of them offered any explanation of why certain materials such as lead and gold should experience a strong attraction, while others, such as aluminum and hydrogen, should be acted upon but weakly. You understand, don't you, that all matter is built up of atoms which are in turn built of electrons, and protons, electrons whirling around the nucleus, made up principally of protons, in such a way that the atom resembles a miniature solar system?" he asked.

"In a general way," I replied. "I remember that Professor Foster at college used to lecture about them."

"Very good," Harry said. "Perhaps you also remember that the heavier atoms are composed of more protons and electrons than the atoms of the lighter elements. The thought struck me one day that since an increase in the number of protons in an atom is accompanied by an increased mass, and at the same time by an increase in the force with which that atom is attracted by other portions of

matter, that the force must be caused by something within the proton.

"It had already been proved," he continued, warming up to his subject, "that ordinary light is produced by sudden changes in energy which result when an electron jumps from one orbit to another in the course of its revolutions around the nucleus of the atom. I have discovered now that the electron itself is built up of still smaller sub-electrons. Changes in the orbits of the sub-electrons produce the gravitational wave. By means of my new method of quadruple hypocycloidal integration I have calculated—."

"Hold on there awhile," I shouted. "You got out of my depth quite a while ago."

Harry laughed.

"I almost forgot your unfamiliarity with higher physics. I was just starting to tell you all about it."

"Never mind, I'll take your word for it, if you'll just tell me the results in plain English."

"All right, Al. Boiled down to bare facts, that machine I showed you produces the gravitational wave. The energy is radiated from the knob on the end of the rod. As a result, other matter is attracted by it. By varying the amount of the substance which you saw me pour into the funnel, I can regulate the power of the wave emitted. When it becomes more powerful than the attraction of the earth on any object, then the object will move towards the source of the stronger wave. By suitable changes in the electrical forces which I apply, I can change the nature of the wave until I get a repelling force instead of an attractive one."

"But why doesn't everything in the room, and even outside, fly towards your machine as soon as you turn it on?" I asked.

"Fortunately its range is limited to a comparatively short distance, depending on the size of the knob and the power used. Outside a radius of about eight or ten inches with this particular machine, the attractive force is less than that of the earth and consequently there is no great disturbance produced."

#### The Gravitomobile

**W**HAT use do you expect to make of this now that you have discovered it?" I inquired.

"Come with me and I'll show you one of the biggest things that has ever been thought of here on this earth," Harry replied.

He led me out of the back door and towards the low hills a short distance away. We climbed over the first ridge and looked down into the valley on the other side. There were a number of small, shedlike shops arranged in a large circle. In the center of this circle there was under construction an enormous structure of some sort. It was so covered with scaffolding that few details could be seen.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I call it my 'Gravitomobile,'" he answered.

When we came nearer I could see through some of the openings in the scaffolding, and I found that the structure was a huge globe made of the same

peculiar, glass-like material as the bulb in the laboratory. In the thicker layers used here the translucent appearance was more noticeable than it had been in the smaller bulb.

Workmen were climbing about, engaged in various tasks. Some were removing metal forms, while others, higher up, were pouring into place a plastic mixture which from my viewpoint appeared to be concrete.

"This is plastonium, a new compound which I have synthesized," said Harry. "It can be mixed and poured into place like concrete. After it sets it becomes as strong as steel, and a better insulator than glass. It is going to make a fine bulb when it is finished. Don't you think so?" he asked.

"For the love of Pete, you don't mean to say you are going to build one of your crazy machines this size, do you? Why, man alive, you'll tear up everything for miles around!" I objected.

"You forget that I don't have to use the full power. Besides, don't forget that I can adjust the wave length so that it will attract only those particular substances I want attracted."

"What use do you expect to make of the thing?"

"By properly directing the repelling forces I shall be able to raise the machine into the air, and by the use of attractive forces from other radiators at the same time I shall be able to pick up objects of all sorts and carry them around wherever I want them. That's why I call it a Gravitomobile—a machine to travel around by using gravitational forces. Can't you see how useful such a device might be?"

"Possibly," I said, "if the contraption will work the way you intend it to."

"There is no doubt about that," he replied optimistically. "It is based on sound theory backed by mathematics. There is no reason why it should fail."

During the next few days the greater part of the scaffolding was taken down, and the workmen began to build at the bottom of the sphere a metal structure in the form of a boxlike compartment about ten or twelve feet deep, and some twenty feet or so in width. This was attached to the surface of the sphere.

As soon as this was completed to Harry's satisfaction, they began another at each end of the first. By the end of the week a ring of the metal compartments extended completely around the sphere. Two great dome shaped metal structures had been placed at the ends, if a sphere can be said to have an end, so that the whole resembled a huge model of the earth with a chain of compartments running around the equator and a metal dome at each pole.

During most of the time Harry had remained in his laboratory, feverishly working on some problem. Not wishing to disturb him I spent some of my time watching the construction work on the Gravitomobile, which had now come to have a peculiar fascination for me.

When the work on these compartments, as I have called them for lack of a better name, was finished, Harry came out and began to supervise the installation of a great deal of machinery therein. Now and then he would find a few spare moments to explain to me what was being done.

It seemed that instead of being one huge bulb, as I had thought, the sphere was divided into a number of sections or independent units. Each of the metal compartments was a power house and control station for one of the sections. There were fourteen of these divisions located under as many sections of the girdle, besides one at each end where the two domes or caps were located.

"The principal wave generators which will supply the attractive or repelling forces necessary for the movement of the machine in space, are the ones located under the central belt," Harry said. "You see those pointed rods which are being placed around the circumference?"

I looked up. Extending outward through a hole in the center of each compartment a long, pointed metallic rod had been placed, and was being fixed in position by pouring a mass of the insulating material, plastonium, around its inner end.

"Those are the radiators. By directing the repelling waves out through the rods pointing downwards the whole machine will be repelled away from the earth with a force depending on the amount of power I use. By directing the waves to one side I shall be able to travel in any direction. I suppose you have seen boats which propelled themselves by shooting out a jet of water at the stern?"

I nodded.

"The idea is very much the same," he said, "except that I can also make use of attractive forces at any time that they suit my convenience better."

"How about the caps on the ends?" I asked.

"They will be used for lifting objects which I wish to carry from one place to another. Each cap contains several hundred feet of cable carrying an attractor on the end. The cable is made of a special alloy which will conduct the waves down to the attractor. When I want to lift anything I shall merely let out cable until the attractor is near the object, turn on the power, and I shall have it fast."

Two days later the Gravitomobile was ready for its trial flight. All the workmen had gathered on the near-by hill to watch it. Even the laboratory men had left their experiments this morning to see the results of the test.

Harry walked over to the compartment nearest the ground, calmly opened a door and climbed in, closing the door again after him. A few moments passed, then the sphere began to glow. An expectant silence settled over the watchers.

An open space appeared between the sphere and the ground where it had been resting. Gradually the space widened, slowly at first—a foot, two feet, five, then faster, ten, twenty, fifty, until finally it floated gracefully several hundred feet above the ground.

There was no doubt that the Gravitomobile was a success. A cheer rose from the crowd. Then followed a series of maneuvers in which the machine rose and fell, moved back and forth over the field, and performed all kinds of stunts. Finally it hovered over a huge boulder some fifty feet in diameter. From one of the end caps a bell shaped piece of metal descended at the end of a long cable until it nearly touched the rock. Then the sphere as-

cended, the heavy boulder dangling at the cable end like an apple on a string.

#### A Scientific Invasion of Mars

**W**HAT do you expect to do with it?" I inquired when he had returned. "Go into the freight business?"

"Al, you never could see a use for anything unless you could make some money out of it, could you?" he laughed. "What would you think of a little exploring trip—to Mars for instance?"

"Mars! Surely you're joking."

"No, Al, I have never been more in earnest in my life. That was the idea I had in mind when I started to build the machine, but I thought I would say nothing about it to you until I could show you the machine can work."

"But what do you want to go to Mars for?"

"Oh, for any number of reasons. I could get first hand information about a lot of things—what kind of people, if any, live there, how they live, and what kind of a place it is. You know that scientists have a lot of theories about Mars. Some think there is life there, while others are just as positive that it is too cold or too dry, or too something or other for life there. As a matter of fact, we know nothing about it. What better way could there be of settling all these arguments than by paying the place a personal visit?"

There was certainly a good deal of logic in his argument. It seemed reasonable enough that the best way to find out about a place was to go there. Besides, who could tell what strange adventures we might have there. Probably it was the last idea that really made up my mind. Ever since I had pondered over Robinson Crusoe and Treasure Island, as a boy, I had harbored a secret desire to explore strange lands.

"By George, that's a good idea," I exclaimed. "When do we start?"

"Not so fast there," returned Harry. "I thought you would decide to come along but we can't start today. The boat hasn't come yet."

"What boat?"

"The one I am going to take with me."

"Why, man alive, what do you want with a boat? You won't find any place to sail it on Mars. It's all desert there."

"I'm not so sure of that," he replied. "I have reason to believe that we'll find some remnants of seas large enough to float a good sized boat."

"What kind of boat is it?" I inquired.

Just then a young man entered the room and handed Harry a piece of paper.

"Here is a radio message that just came," the messenger announced.

"The boat is in the harbor now," Harry said after reading the message. "Let's go down and take a look at her. It's only a few miles."

The boat proved to be a small ocean steamship, over two hundred feet long. From the outside she appeared not radically different from other ships of the same type. Inside, however, I found that in place of the usual staterooms, a large number of well equipped laboratories had been fitted up.

"I intend to take along enough men so that we

## AMAZING STORIES

will be prepared to make a real study of whatever we find there," Harry explained. "One man alone, no matter how brilliant, could not hope to thoroughly cover all the fields of chemistry, mineralogy, zoology, entomology, and the numerous other branches of science, so I am taking along men who are specialists in these lines. When we get there I shall have a definite procedure mapped out for each man so that we will be able to cover his ground effectively without wasting any time. I even plan to take some reporters and a couple of cameramen to write up the story of the trip and take motion pictures."

"Of course I could not even begin to carry all these things with me on the sphere because there is not enough room. The solution to the problem seemed to be to use the Gravitomobile merely as the means of carrying along some other conveyance which was better adapted for storing and carrying things. What sort of a conveyance should I use?"

"It was because a modern steamship has so many things built into a small space that I decided to make use of one instead of trying to build something of my own design. It already is equipped with power plant and facilities for storing and preparing food for many people for a long time; in fact, it is a miniature floating city.

"We can take along our well equipped laboratories; we can take food, fuel, books, and all kinds of things that will make our work easier and life more comfortable than if we had to rely on what little we could crowd into the limited space on the Gravitomobile itself. Just imagine having all the comforts of home way off there on a strange planet," Harry enthused.

I imagined. It did sound good—too good to be true.

"It will be a pretty heavy load, won't it?" I asked, looking rather doubtfully at the ship.

"Yes, but nowhere near the limit of the machine's lifting capacity," was the response. "I will have to start getting our laboratory apparatus transferred to the ship," he went on. "The food and fuel are already aboard, and the laboratories have been pretty well fixed up, but there are still a number of special instruments to be put in place."

### The Journey

**S**EVERAL more days were required to get the apparatus aboard and in its proper places, but finally everything was in readiness. The scientists, reporters and cameramen had moved into their quarters on the ship. Harry and Pete Nelson were to stay on the Gravitomobile, because they were needed to operate the machine.

"Where would you rather ride, on the ship or with me?" Harry asked me.

"I'll go with you," I decided.

It was the first time I had been inside the sphere. The greater part of the space in each compartment was occupied by machinery. A great deal of this seemed to consist of electrical generators, transformers and other similar devices. These, I was told, were necessary to generate the currents which were fed into the bulk to produce the gravitational waves. A curious mechanism near the center was

arranged to feed in the metallic powder which in some way seemed to be responsible for the working of the device. One peculiarity I could not help remarking about.

"Everything is upside down."

"Yes, relative to the earth," Harry replied. "When we get out into space away from the earth's attraction, there will be no up or down. We shall find ourselves floating around in here like so many balloons. It will be rather awkward to try to do anything in that predicament, so I have placed attractors in the side of the compartment next to the sphere. When I turn them on, we will be attracted in that direction and will be able to walk around as easily as though we were on the ground."

Pete, who had been sent to see if the ship was in readiness, now returned.

"All ready," he reported briefly.

He climbed in and fastened the door. Harry stepped over to the control panel, moved two or three small levers, pressed a button and slowly began to turn one of the numerous knobs. A minute or two passed and it seemed that nothing had happened.

"What's the matter? Why doesn't it start?" I asked.

"It might interest you to look out the window," Harry suggested.

I turned towards the observation port, and was amazed to find that the ground was far below. The machine had started so gently that I had failed to notice it. A twirl of another knob and we moved swiftly toward the bay. In a moment or two we were hovering over the boat.

Then the two attractors rapidly descended until they almost touched the vessel, one at the bow, the other at the stern. I could see tiny figures of men moving about on the deck. A voice came from the radiophone set:

"All right there! Hoist away!"

The ship lifted as easily as one might lift a child's toy steamer out of a pond. It seemed incredible, but there was the boat dangling in the air below us at the end of two slender cables, while the earth rapidly dropped away. Harry was busily engaged in making some fine adjustments on the control board. Pete handed me a pair of binoculars with which he had been regarding the boat.

"One fellow seems to be on the job," he remarked.

I took the glasses and saw one of the cameramen with his tripod set up on top of the bridge, industriously grinding away.

Soon I began to feel a shortness of breath, and a queer feeling in my ears.

"The air is getting thinner," said Harry. "We had better close the porthole." He slid a heavy plate glass cover over the opening, and clamped it down over a rubber gasket. We could still see out, but we were no longer exposed to the rapidly decreasing air pressure.

Down below I could still see tiny figures moving about on the ship.

The thin air doesn't seem to be bothering them much," I said wonderingly.

"The gravitational field around the attractors serves to hold a supply of air around the ship. I

am hoping that it will last for the greater part of the journey," Harry explained. "If it should gradually leak away, there will be no harm done because I have taken the precaution of fitting the boat with air-tight portholes and hatches which can be closed. However, I don't think they will have to be used, although here on the sphere, I can't keep an atmosphere because of the repelling waves I am radiating from the rods."

THE sky soon became darker, and a few of the brighter stars began to show, although the sun was still in plain view. The earth began to take on the appearance of a huge relief map, practically the whole of both North and South America being visible. The globe was noticeably convex.

We had left the denser parts of the earth's atmosphere, and Harry increased the speed although we had been traveling pretty fast before. Soon I noticed a peculiar lightness in my steps as I walked along the passageway. I began to feel as though I were an actor in one of those slow motion films where people float around in the air for a second or two before they land again.

"We are ten thousand miles from the earth," Harry announced after inspecting an instrument which appeared to consist chiefly of a swinging pendulum attached to some sort of a mechanism. "I think I shall turn on the floor attractors before we completely lose our footing."

"Hold your feet toward the ceiling, like this," he ordered.

He had taken hold of a metal rod with one hand and with it as a support, was standing on his head. With his free hand he reached for a knob.

It looked like a mighty senseless procedure to me but I did as I was told. A second later he turned the knob, and like a flash my feet shot to what had been the ceiling and stopped with a jar that seemed pretty violent after the easy, semi-floating movements I had been experiencing. I now saw Harry's logic in having me stand on my head. Had I not done so I should no doubt have been wearing a good sized bump on my head where it would have come in contact with the new floor.

"How does it feel?" Harry asked, unconcernedly strolling about in his new position.

"Rather queer. Am I going to hang upside down like this for the rest of the trip?"

He laughed.

"That's just your imagination," he told me. "It will soon wear off. You had better climb into bed now and get some sleep. I'm going to do so myself as soon as I see that Pete has everything going smoothly."

Still feeling upside down, but finding that there seemed to be no immediate danger of falling off the ceiling, I crawled into my upside down bunk.

When I arose in the morning, I was surprised to find that what I had thought of as walking on the ceiling now seemed to be perfectly natural. In fact I could scarcely convince myself that I had been walking on the opposite side of the room on the previous day.

Harry had breakfast ready, and I ate ravenously, largely, I suppose, because I had been so excited

the day before that I had not eaten much. Nothing very exciting occurred that day or, indeed, for several days. Pete and Harry took turns on watch while I insisted upon being promoted to the position of cook, as I felt that I ought to do something to help, and I would have been of little use at anything else.

The earth's disk had gradually grown smaller and fainter, while that of Mars became brighter and clearer. Finally there came a day when we could make out the details of the planet's surface.

During the next day or two the planet's disk continued to grow. Fresh details which looked like the outlines of continents showed up plainly now. Harry checked our speed somewhat. The planet, now much larger than the moon appears to us on the earth, began to take on a convex appearance. Looking for the ship I found that it had swung around until it lay directly towards Mars.

Harry decided to turn off the attractors in the floor and I again experienced that peculiar topsy turvy feeling that I had felt when he turned them on, but this time the feeling did not last very long.

The planet grew larger and larger until it finally filled our whole field of view. Harry slowed down and began to look for a place to land.

We could plainly see the details of the surface below us now. For the most part it seemed to be desert. Further around on one side, we saw a small body of water, with a stream flowing out of it.

"We could land our ship down there," I ventured.

"Yes," Harry replied, "but I want to see if there are any better places and if there are any signs of life. I am going to follow that stream and see where it leads."

#### Catastrophe

**W**e were now drifting along slowly only a few hundred feet above the surface of the ground. Presently a number of tall, cylindrical objects with rounded tops appeared ahead. As we drew nearer, it became evident that they were buildings of some kind. They appeared to be built of stone of various colors ranging from a dull brown to a light yellow. The size varied considerably. There were large ones, and small ones; some were short and wide, others high and narrow. Only in one respect were they alike—each had on its top a dome, supported by pillars, and every dome and pillar was bright yellow in color.

These peculiar structures were built along both banks of a ravine which appeared to be of great depth, for I could not see the bottom. The stream we had been following flowed over a ledge of rock and became a beautiful waterfall disappearing into the depths below.

We had started to drift over the ravine when the machine suddenly lurched and began to fall.

"Good Heavens! The bulb partitions have broken down!" cried Harry as he sprang for the control board. "The waves have got mixed and have neutralized each other."

Inside the sphere I could see a bright red glow, where it should have been faint and green. In spite of Harry's frenzied efforts, we continued to fall.

We were entering the ravine now. I caught a

## AMAZING STORIES

glimpse of people on the edge of the cliff—a strange race with red skins and a winglike growth across their heads and shoulders.

The red glow filled the whole sphere as Harry applied the last bit of power the generators could produce, in a last vain effort to check our descent.

"My God," I groaned. "There goes the ship."

It had parted from the cable at the bow, and was hanging by the stern. Even as I watched, the hold weakened there and it plunged headlong into the gulf.

We were falling now, faster and faster. I lay as though petrified, living, it seemed, through ages of time, yet powerless to do anything. A numbing terror held me in an icy grip.

I dully felt an impact, heard faintly a dull roar as hundreds of tons of material were crushed and rent into a shapeless mass, felt myself forcibly flattened against a hard, unyielding surface.

Then all was darkness.

When I regained consciousness, there came the sudden knowledge that I was still in Professor Foster's physics class, and not on another planet. Dr. Foster was looking at me.

"What is your answer, Mr Fisher?" he said.

"I beg pardon, sir, but I didn't hear the question."

"Perhaps it would aid your hearing if you could postpone your afternoon nap until after class," he remarked sarcastically.

THE END.

## PLANET NEPTUNE TO MOTHER SUN

MOTHER OF WORLD, you shine afar  
With the feeble light of an evening star;  
Your smile is faint as I glimpse your face  
Across the millions of miles of space.

Can you recall that destined day  
When I left your arms and sped away  
To spin my life in the lonely wide? —  
Alone till a child moved by my side.

Smaller you grew and dimmer yet  
As eons dawned and millennia set,  
Till you lived for midgets, Mars and Earth,  
Older than I, but younger in birth.

Ages of ages have passed since then,  
And time must die ere we meet again,  
Yet I send my longing across the night  
To dust of my dust and light of my light.

—By Leland S. Copeland.

## ALONE

I OFTEN think how lonely the Lord of Life must be,  
Who made the pneumococcus and poured the starry  
sea;  
Who built a brontosaurus and locked its bones in  
earth  
Ere anthropoid or human had Cenozoic birth.

How lonely, how forsaken, the God of Suns must be,  
With neither wife nor comrade to share Eternity!  
His home quintillions measure, but every else too  
small,  
For suns themselves are motes that dust the Empty  
All.

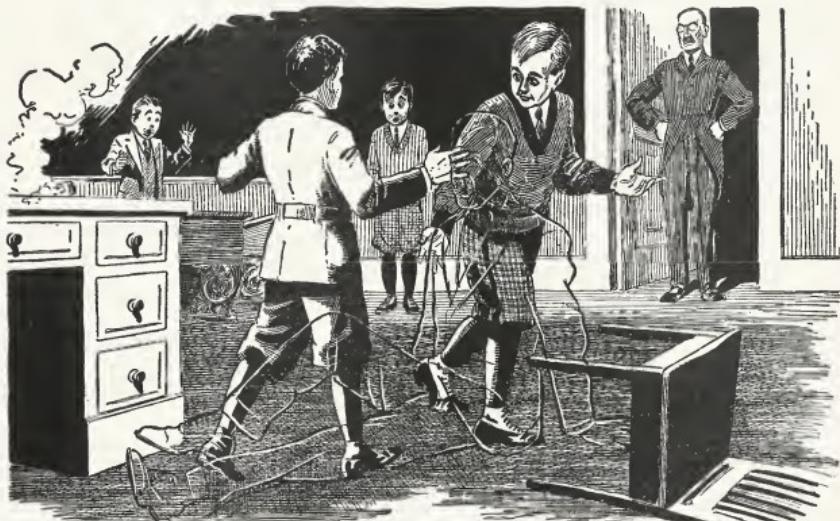
I sometimes think how sated the King of Kings  
must be,  
Whose microscopic vision records Infinity —  
The toils and wars of trillions, while hungry, love,  
and hope  
Unreel the old, old dramas through which the  
midges grope.

—By Leland S. Copeland.

# The PLATTNER STORY

## By H. G. Wells

Author of "The Time Machine," "The Island of Dr. Moreau," etc.



... Two of the boys, gesticulating, walked one after the other clean through him! Neither manifested the slightest consciousness of his presence.

**W**HETHER the story of Gottfried Plattner is to be credited or not is a pretty question in the value of evidence. On the one hand, we have seven witnesses —to be perfectly exact, we have six and a half pairs of eyes, and one undeniable fact; and on the other we have—what is it?—prejudice, common sense, the inertia of opinion. Never were there seven more honest-seeming witnesses; never was there a more undeniable fact than the invasion of Gottfried Plattner's anatomical structure, and—never was there a more preposterous story than the one they have to tell! The most preposterous part of the story is the worthy Gottfried's contribution (for I count him as one of the seven). Heaven forbid that I should be led into giving countenance

to superstition by a passion for impartiality, and so come to share the fate of Eusapia's\* patrons! Frankly, I believe there is something crooked about this business of Gottfried Plattner; but what that crooked factor is, I will admit as frankly, I do not know. I have been surprised at the credit accorded to the story in the most unexpected and authoritative quarters. The fairest way to the reader, however, will be for me to tell it without further comment.

Gottfried Plattner is, in spite of his name, a free-born Englishman. His father was an Alsatian who came to England in the sixties, married a respect-

*We believe that this story, by our well-known author, which was written some years ago, constitutes the forerunner of all later stories in which the Fourth Dimension played a great rôle. Wells somehow has been captivated by the idea that there is such a thing as a fourth or higher plane. He does not seem to have changed his mind about this, for while the present story was written many years ago, a very recent story of his also brings in, again, a higher plane, supposedly existing alongside of our own. The Plattner Story is an extraordinarily well-written scientific tale, and is plausibly as easily understandable, and will particularly appeal to those whose ideas of the Fourth Dimension are rather hazy.*

able English girl of unexceptional antecedents, and died in 1887 after a wholesome and uneventful life

\*The famous spiritualistic medium, Eusapia Palladino, who had rather sad experiences in her visit to this country.

## AMAZING STORIES

(devoted, I understand, chiefly to the laying of parquet flooring). Gottfried's age is seven-and-twenty. He is, by virtue of his heritage of three languages, Modern Languages Master in a small private school in the south of England. To the casual observer he is singularly like any other Modern Languages Master in any other small private school. His costume is neither very costly nor very fashionable, but, on the other hand, it is not markedly cheap or shabby; his complexion, like his height and his bearing, is inconspicuous. You would notice, perhaps, that, like the majority of people, his face was not absolutely symmetrical, his right eye a little larger than the left, and his jaw a trifle heavier on the right side. If you, as an ordinary careless person, were to bare his chest and feel his heart beating, you would probably find it quite like the heart of any one else. But here you and the trained observer would part company. If you found his heart quite ordinary, the trained observer would find it quite otherwise. And once the thing was pointed out to you, you too would perceive the peculiarity easily enough. It is that Gottfried's heart beats on the right side of his body.

Now, that is not the only singularity of Gottfried's structure, although it is the only one that would appeal to the untrained mind. Careful sounding of Gottfried's internal arrangements by a well-known surgeon seems to point to the fact that all the other unsymmetrical parts of his body are similarly misplaced. The right lobe of his liver is on the left side, the left on his right; while his lungs, too, are similarly contraposed. What is still more singular, unless Gottfried is a consummate actor, we must believe that his right hand has recently become his left. Since the occurrences we are about to consider (as impartially as possible), he has found the utmost difficulty in writing, except from right to left across the paper with his left hand. He cannot throw with his right hand, he is perplexed at meal-times between knife and fork, and his ideas of the rule of the road—he is a cyclist—are still a dangerous confusion. And there is not a scrap of evidence to show that before these occurrences Gottfried was at all left-handed.

There is yet another wonderful fact in this preposterous business. Gottfried produces three photographs of himself. You have him at the age of five or six, thrusting fat legs at you from under a plaid frock, and scowling. In that photograph his left eye is a little larger than his right, and his jaw is a trifle heavier on the left side. This is the reverse of his present living condition. The photograph of Gottfried at fourteen seems to contradict these facts, but that is because it is one of those cheap "Gem" photographs or "tintypes" that were then in vogue, taken direct upon metal, and therefore reversing things just as a looking-glass would. The third photograph represents him at one-and-twenty, and confirms the record of the others. There seems here evidence of the strongest confirmatory character that Gottfried has exchanged his left side for his right. Yet how a human being can be so changed, short of a fantastic and pointless miracle, it is exceedingly hard to suggest.

In one way, of course, these facts might be explicable on the supposition that Plattner has undertaken an elaborate mystification, or the strength of his heart's displacement. Photographs may be faked, and left-handedness imitated. But the character of the man does not lend itself to any such theory. He is quiet, practical, unobtrusive, and thoroughly sane, from the Nordau standpoint. He likes beer, and smokes moderately, takes walking exercise daily, and has a healthy high estimate of the value of his teaching. He has a good but untrained tenor voice, and takes a pleasure in singing airs of a popular and cheerful character. He is fond, but not morbidly fond, of reading—chiefly fiction pervaded with a vaguely pious optimism—sleeps well, and rarely dreams. He is, in fact, the very last person to evolve a fantastic fable. Indeed, so far from forcing this story upon the world, he has been singularly reticent on the matter. He meets inquirers with a certain engaging—bashfulness is almost the word, that disarms the most suspicious. He seems genuinely ashamed that anything so unusual has occurred to him.

It is to be regretted that Plattner's aversion to the idea of post-mortem dissection may postpone, perhaps for ever, the positive proof that his entire body has had its left and right sides transposed. Upon that fact mainly the credibility of his story hangs. There is no way of taking a man and moving him about in space as ordinary people understand space, that will result in our changing his sides. Whatever you do, his right is still his right, his left his left. You can do that with a perfectly thin and flat thing, of course. If you were to cut a figure out of paper, any figure with a right and left side, you could change its sides simply by lifting it up and turning it over. But with a solid it is different. Mathematical theorists tell us that the only way in which the right and left sides of a solid body can be changed is by taking that body clean out of space as we know it—taking it out of ordinary existence, that is, and turning it somewhere outside space. This is a little abstruse, no doubt, but any one with any knowledge of mathematical theory will assure the reader of its truth. To put the thing in technical language, the curious inversion of Plattner's right and left sides is proof that he has moved out of our space into what is called the Fourth Dimension, and that he has returned again to our world. Unless we choose to consider ourselves the victims of an elaborate and motiveless fabrication, we are almost bound to believe that this has occurred.

So much for the tangible facts. We come now to the account of the phenomena that attended his temporary disappearance from the world. It appears that in the Sussexville Proprietary School, Plattner not only discharged the duties of Modern Languages Master, but also taught chemistry, commercial geography, bookkeeping, shorthand, drawing, and any other additional subject to which the changing fancies of the boys' parents might direct attention. He knew little or nothing of these various subjects, but in secondary as distinguished from Board or elementary schools, knowledge in the teacher is, very properly, by no means so necessary

as high moral character and gentlemanly tone. In chemistry he was particularly deficient, knowing, he says, nothing beyond the Three Gases (whatever the three gases may be). As, however, his pupils began by knowing nothing, and derived all their information from him, this caused him (or any one) but little inconvenience for several terms. Then a little boy named Whibble joined the school, who had been educated (it seems) by some mischievous relative into an inquiring habit of mind. This little boy followed Plattner's lessons with marked and sustained interest, and in order to exhibit his zeal on the subject, brought, at various times, substances for Plattner to analyze. Plattner, flattered by this evidence of his power of awakening interest, and trusting to the boy's ignorance, analyzed these, and even made general statements as to their composition. Indeed, he was so far stimulated by his pupil as to obtain a work upon analytical chemistry, and study it during his supervision of the evening's preparation. He was surprised to find chemistry quite an interesting subject.

So far the story is absolutely commonplace. But now the greenish powder comes upon the scene. The source of that greenish powder seems, unfortunately, lost. Master Whibble tells a tortuous story of finding it done up in a packet in a disused limekiln near the Downs. It would have been an excellent thing for Plattner, and possibly for Master Whibble's family, if a match could have been applied to that powder there and then. The young gentleman certainly did not bring it to school in a packet, but in a common eight-ounce graduated medicine bottle, plugged with masticated newspaper. He gave it to Plattner at the end of the afternoon school. Four boys had been detained after school prayers in order to complete some neglected tasks, and Plattner was supervising these in the small class-room in which the chemical teaching was conducted. The appliances for the practical teaching of chemistry in the Sussexville Proprietary School, as in most small schools in this country, are characterized by a severe simplicity. They are kept in a small cupboard standing in a recess, and having about the same capacity as a common traveling trunk. Plattner, being bored with his passive superintendence, seems to have welcomed the intervention of Whibble with his green powder as an agreeable diversion, and, unlocking this cupboard, proceeded at once with his analytical experiments. Whibble sat, luckily for himself, at a safe distance, regarding him. The four malefactors, feigning a profound absorption in their work, watched him furtively with the keenest interest. For even within the limits of the Three Gases, Plattner's practical chemistry was, I understand, temerarious.

THEY are practically unanimous in their account of Plattner's proceedings. He poured a little of the green powder into a test-tube, and tried the substance with water, hydrochloric acid, nitric acid, and sulphuric acid in succession. Getting no result, he emptied out a little heap—nearly half the bottleful, in fact—upon a slate and tried a match. He held the medicine bottle in his left hand. The stuff began to smoke and melt, and then exploded with deafening violence and a blinding flash.

The five boys, seeing the flash and being prepared for catastrophes, ducked below their desks, and were none of them seriously hurt. The window was blown out into the playground, and the blackboard on its easel was upset. The slate was smashed to atoms. Some plaster fell from the ceiling. No other damage was done to the school edifice or appliances, and the boys at first, seeing nothing of Plattner, fancied he was knocked down and lying out of their sight below the desks. They jumped out of their places to go to his assistance, and were amazed to find the space empty. Being still confused by the sudden violence of the report, they hurried to the open door, under the impression that he must have been hurt, and have rushed out of the room. But Carson, the foremost, nearly collided in the doorway with the principal, Mr. Lidgett.

Mr. Lidgett is a corpulent, excitable man with one eye. The boys described him as stumbling into the room mouthing some of those tempered expletives irritable schoolmasters accustom themselves to use—lest worst befall. "Wretched mumchancer!" he said. "Where's Mr. Plattner?" The boys are agreed on the very words. ("Wobbler," "snivelling puppy," and "mumchancer" are, it seems, among the ordinary small change of Mr. Lidgett's scholastic commerce.)

Where's Mr. Plattner? That was a question that was to be repeated many times in the next few days. It really seemed as though that frantic hyperbole, "blown to atoms," had for once realized itself. There was not a visible particle of Plattner to be seen; not a drop of blood nor a stitch of clothing to be found. Apparently he had been blown clean out of existence and left not a wrack behind. Not so much as would cover a sixpenny piece, to quote a proverbial expression! The evidence of his absolute disappearance as a consequence of that explosion is indubitable.

It is not necessary to enlarge here upon the commotion excited in the Sussexville Proprietary School, and in Sussexville and elsewhere, by this event. It is quite possible, indeed, that some of the readers of these pages may recall the hearing of some remote and dying version of that excitement during the last summer holidays. Lidgett, it would seem, did everything in his power to suppress and minimize the story. He instituted a penalty of twenty-five lines for any mention of Plattner's name among the boys, and stated in the schoolroom that he was clearly aware of his assistant's whereabouts. He was afraid, he explains, that the possibility of an explosion happening, in spite of the elaborate precautions taken to minimize the practical teaching of chemistry, might injure the reputation of the school; and so might any mysterious quality in Plattner's departure. Indeed, he did everything in his power to make the occurrence seem as ordinary as possible. In particular, he cross-examined the five eye-witnesses of the occurrence so searchingly that they began to doubt the plain evidence of their senses. But, in spite of these efforts, the tale, in a magnified and distorted state, made a nine days' wonder in the district, and several parents withdrew their sons on colorable pretexts. Not the least remarkable point in the matter is the fact that a large

number of people in the neighborhood dreamed singularly vivid dreams of Plattner during the period of excitement before his return, and that these dreams had a curious uniformity. In almost all of them Plattner was seen, sometimes singly, sometimes in company, wandering about through a coruscating iridescence. In all cases his face was pale and distressed, and in some he gesticulated towards the dreamer. One or two of the boys, evidently under the influence of nightmare, fancied that Plattner approached them with remarkable swiftness, and seemed to look closely into their very eyes. Others fled with Plattner from the pursuit of vague and extraordinary creatures of a globular shape. But all these fancies were forgotten in inquiries and speculations when on the Wednesday next but one after the Monday of the explosion, Plattner returned.

The circumstances of his return were as singular as those of his departure. So far as Mr. Lidgett's somewhat choleric outline can be filled in from Plattner's hesitating statements, it would appear that on Wednesday evening, towards the hour of sunset, the former gentleman, having dismissed evening preparation, was engaged in his garden, picking and eating strawberries, a fruit of which he is inordinately fond. It is a large old-fashioned garden, secured from observation, fortunately, by a high and ivy-covered red-brick wall. Just as he was stooping over a particularly prolific plant, there was a flash in the air and a heavy thud, and before he could look round, some heavy body struck him violently from behind. He was pitched forward, crushing the strawberries he held in his hand, and that so roughly, that his silk hat—Mr. Lidgett adheres to the older ideas of scholastic costume—was driven violently down upon his forehead, and almost over one eye. This heavy missile, which slid over him sideways and collapsed into a sitting posture among the strawberry plants, proved to be our long-lost Mr. Gottfried Plattner, in an extremely dishevelled condition. He was collarless and hatless, his linen was dirty, and there was blood upon his hands. Mr. Lidgett was so indignant and surprised that he remained on all-fours, and with his hat jammed down on his eye, while he expostulated vehemently with Plattner for his disrespectful and unaccountable conduct.

This scarcely idyllic scene completes what I may call the exterior version of the Plattner story—its exoteric aspect. It is quite unnecessary to enter here into all the details of his dismissal by Mr. Lidgett. Such details, with the full names and dates and references, will be found in the larger report of these occurrences that was laid before the Society for the Investigation of Abnormal Phenomena. The singular transposition of Plattner's right and left sides was scarcely observed for the first day or so, and then first in connection with his disposition to write from right to left across the blackboard. He concealed rather than ostended his curious confirmatory circumstance, as he considered it would unfavorably affect his prospects in a new situation. The displacement of his heart was discovered some months later, when he was having a tooth extracted under anaesthetics. He then, very unwillingly, al-

lowed a cursory surgical examination to be made of himself, with a view to a brief account in the *Journal of Anatomy*. That exhausts the statement of the material facts; that we may now go on to consider Plattner's account of the matter.

**B**UT first let us clearly differentiate between the preceding portion of this story and what is to follow. All I have told thus far is established by such evidence as even a criminal lawyer would approve. Every one of the witnesses is still alive; the reader, if he have the leisure, may hunt the lads out tomorrow, or even brave the terrors of the redoubtable Lidgett, and cross-examine and trap and test to his heart's content; Gottfried Plattner himself, and his twisted heart and his three photographs, are producible. It may be taken as proved that he did disappear for nine days as the consequence of an explosion; that he returned almost as violently, under circumstances in their nature annoying to Mr. Lidgett, whatever the details of those circumstances may be; and that he returned inverted, just as a reflection returns from a mirror. From the last fact, as I have already stated, it follows almost inevitably that Plattner, during those nine days, must have been in some state of existence altogether out of space. The evidence to these statements is, indeed, far stronger than that upon which most murderers are hanged. But for his own particular account of where he had been, with its confused explanations and well-nigh self-contradictory details, we have only Mr. Gottfried Plattner's word. I do not wish to discredit that, but I must point out—what so many writers upon obscure psychic phenomena fail to do—that we are passing here from the practically undeniable to that kind of matter which any reasonable man is entitled to believe or reject as he thinks proper. The previous statements render it plausible; its discordance with common experience tilts it towards the incredible. I would prefer not to sway the beam of the reader's judgment either way, but simply to tell the story as Plattner told it to me.

He gave me his narrative, I may state, at my house at Chislehurst, and so soon as he had left me that evening, I went into my study and wrote down everything as I remembered it. Subsequently he was good enough to read over a typewritten copy, so that its substantial correctness is undeniable.

He states that at the moment of the explosion he distinctly thought he was killed. He felt lifted off his feet and driven forcibly backward. It is a curious fact for psychologists that he thought clearly during his backward flight, and wondered whether he should hit the chemistry cupboard or the black-board easel. His heels struck ground, and he staggered and fell heavily into a sitting position on something soft and firm. For a moment the concussion stunned him. He became aware at once of a vivid scent of singed hair, and he seemed to hear the voice of Lidgett asking for him. You will understand that for a time his mind was greatly confused.

At first he was under the impression that he was still standing in the class-room. He perceived quite distinctly the surprise of the boys and the entry of

Mr. Lidgett. He is quite positive upon that score. He did not hear their remarks; but that he ascribed to the deafening effect of the experiment. Things about him seemed curiously dark and faint, but his mind explained that on the obvious but mistaken idea that the explosion had engendered a huge volume of dark smoke. Through the dimness the figures of Lidgett and the boys moved, as faint and silent as ghosts. Plattner's face still tingled with the stinging heat of the flash. He was, he says, "all muddled." His first definite thoughts seem to have been of his personal safety. He thought he was perhaps blinded and deafened. He felt his limbs and face in a gingerly manner. Then his perceptions grew clearer, and he was astonished to miss the old familiar desks and other school room furniture about him. Only dim, uncertain, gray shapes stood in the place of these. Then came a thing that made him shout aloud, and awoke his stunned faculties to instant activity. *Two of the boys, gesticulating, walked one after the other clean through him!* Neither manifested the slightest consciousness of his presence. It is difficult to imagine the sensation he felt. They came against him, he says, with no more force than a wisp of mist.

Plattner's first thought after that was that he was dead. Having been brought up with thoroughly sound views in these matters, however, he was a little surprised to find his body still about him. His second conclusion was that he was not dead, but that the others were: that the explosion had destroyed the Sussexville Proprietary School and every soul in it except himself. But that, too, was scarcely satisfactory. He was thrown back upon astonished observation.

Everything about him was profoundly dark: at first it seemed to have an altogether ebony blackness. Overhead was a black firmament. The only touch of light in the scene was a faint greenish glow at the edge of the sky in one direction, which threw into prominence a horizon of undulating black hills. This, I say, was his impression at first. As his eye grew accustomed to the darkness, he began to distinguish a faint quality of differentiating greenish color in the circumambient night. Against this background the furniture and occupants of the class-room, it seems, stood out like phosphorescent spectres, faint and impalpable. He extended his hand, and thrust it without an effort through the wall of the room by the fireplace.

HE describes himself as making a strenuous effort to attract attention. He shouted to Lidgett, and tried to seize the boys as they went to and fro. He only desisted from these attempts when Mrs. Lidgett, whom he (as an Assistant Master) naturally disliked, entered the room. He says the sensation of being in the world and yet not a part of it, was an extraordinarily disagreeable one. He compared his feelings, not inaptly, to those of a cat watching a mouse through a window. Whenever he made a motion to communicate with the dim, familiar world about him, he found an invisible, incomprehensible barrier preventing intercourse.

He then turned his attention to his solid environment. He found the medicine bottle still unbroken

in his hand, with the remainder of the green powder therein. He put this in his pocket, and began to feel about him. Apparently he was sitting on a boulder of rock covered with a velvety moss. The dark country about him he was unable to see, the faint, misty picture of the school-room blotting it out, but he had a feeling (due perhaps to a cold wind) that he was near the crest of a hill, and that a steep valley fell away beneath his feet. The green glow along the edge of the sky seemed to be growing in extent and intensity. He stood up, rubbing his eyes.

It would seem that he made a few steps, going steeply downhill, and then stumbled, nearly fell, and sat down again upon a jagged mass of rock to watch the dawn. He became aware that the world about him was absolutely silent. It was as still as it was dark, and though there was a cold wind blowing 'up the hill-face, the rustle of grass, the soughing of the boughs that should have accompanied it, were absent. He could hear, therefore, if he could not see, that the hillside upon which he stood was rocky and desolate. The green grew brighter every moment, and as it did so a faint, transparent blood-red mingled with, but did not mitigate, the blackness of the sky overhead and the rocky desolations about him. Having regard to what follows, I am inclined to think that that redness may have been an optical effect due to contrast. Something black fluttered momentarily against the livid yellow-green of the lower sky, and then the thin and penetrating voice of a bell rose out of the black gulf below him. An oppressive expectation grew with the growing light.

It is probable that an hour or more elapsed while he sat there, the strange green light showing brighter every moment, and spreading slowly in flamboyant fingers, upward towards the zenith. As it grew, the spectral vision of our world became relatively or absolutely fainter. Probably both, for the time must have been about that of our earthly sunset. So far as his vision of our world went, Plattner, by his few steps downhill, had passed through the floor of the class-room, and was now, it seemed, sitting in mid-air in the larger school-room downstairs. He saw the boarders distinctly, but much more faintly than he had seen Lidgett. They were preparing their evening tasks, and he noticed with interest that several were cheating with their Euclid riders by means of a crib, a compilation whose existence he had hitherto never suspected. As the time passed, they faded steadily, as steadily as the light of the green dawn increased.

Looking down into the valley, he saw that the light had crept far down its rocky sides, and that the profound blackness of the abyss was now broken by a minute green glow, like the light of a glow-worm. And almost immediately the limb of a huge heavenly body of blazing green rose over the basaltic undulations of the distant hills, and the monstrous hill-masses about him came out gaunt and desolate, in green light and deep, ruddy black shadows. He became aware of a vast number of ball-shaped objects drifting as thistledown drifts over the high ground. There were none of these nearer to him than the opposite side of the gorge. The bell

below twanged quicker and quicker, with something like impatient insistence, and several lights moved hither and thither. The boys at work at their desks were now almost imperceptibly faint.

This extinction of our world, when the green sun of this other universe rose, is a curious point upon which Plattner insists. During the Other-World night it is difficult to move about, on account of the vividness with which the things of this world are visible. It becomes a riddle to explain why, if this is the case, we in this world catch no glimpse of the Other-World. It is due, perhaps, to the comparatively vivid illumination of this world of ours. Plattner describes the midday of the Other-World, at its brightest, as not being nearly so bright as this world at full moon, while its night is profoundly black. Consequently, the amount of light, even in an ordinary dark room, is sufficient to render the things of the Other-World invisible, on the same principle that faint phosphorescence is only visible in the profoundest darkness. I have tried, since he told me his story, to see something of the Other-World by sitting for a long space in a photographer's dark room at night. I have certainly seen indistinctly the form of greenish slopes and rocks, but only, I must admit, very indistinctly indeed. The reader may possibly be more successful. Plattner tells me that, since his return he has dreamt and seen and recognized places in the Other-World, but this is probably due to his memory of these scenes. It seems quite possible that people with unusually keen eyesight may occasionally catch a glimpse of this strange Other-world about us.

**H**OWEVER, this is a digression. As the green sun rose, a long street of black buildings became perceptible though only darkly and indistinctly, in the gorge, and after some hesitation, Plattner began to clamber down the precipitous descent towards them. The descent was long and exceedingly tedious, being so not only by the extraordinary steepness, but also by reason of the looseness of the boulders with which the whole face of the hill was strewn. The noise of his descent—now and then his heels struck fire from the rocks—seemed to be the only sound in the world, for the beating of the bell had ceased. As he drew nearer, he perceived that the various edifices had a singular resemblance to tombs and mausoleums and monuments, saving only that they were all uniformly black instead of being white, as most sepulchres are. And then he saw, crowding out of the largest building, very much as people disperse from church, a number of pallid, rounded, pale-green figures. These dispersed in several directions about the broad street of the place, some going through side alleys and reappearing upon the steepness of the hill, others entering some of the small black buildings which lined the way.

At the sight of these things drifting up towards him, Plattner stopped, staring. They were not walking, they were indeed limbless, and they had the appearance of human heads, beneath which a tadpole-like body swung. He was too astonished at their strangeness, too full, indeed, of strangeness, to be seriously alarmed by them. They drove to-

wards him, in front of the chill wind that was blowing uphill, much as soap-bubbles drive before a draught. And as he looked at the nearest of those approaching, he saw it was indeed a human head, albeit with singularly large eyes, and wearing such an expression of distress and anguish as he had never seen before upon mortal countenance. He was surprised to find that it did not turn to regard him, but seemed to be watching and following some unseen moving thing. For a moment he was puzzled, and then it occurred to him that this creature was watching with its enormous eyes something that was happening in the world he had just left. Nearer it came, and nearer, and he was too astonished to cry out. It made a very faint fretting sound as it came close to him. Then it struck his face with a gentle pat—its touch was very cold—and drove past him, and upward towards the crest of the hill.

An extraordinary conviction flashed across Plattner's mind that this head had a strong likeness to Lidgett. Then he turned his attention to the other heads that were now swarming thickly up the hill-side. None made the slightest sign of recognition. One or two, indeed, came close to his head and almost followed the example of the first, but he dodged convulsively out of the way. Upon most of them he saw the same expression of unavailing regret he had seen upon the first, and heard the same faint sounds of wretchedness from them. One or two wept, and one rolling swiftly uphill wore an expression of diabolical rage. But others were cold, and several had a look of gratified interest in their eyes. One, at least, was almost in an ecstasy of happiness. Plattner does not remember that he recognized any more likenesses in those he saw at this time.

For several hours, perhaps, Plattner watched these strange things dispersing themselves over the hills, and not till long after they had ceased to issue from the clustering black buildings in the gorge, did he resume his downward climb. The darkness about him increased so much that he had difficulty in stepping true. Overhead the sky was now a bright, pale green. He felt neither hunger nor thirst. Later, when he did he found a chilly stream running down the centre of the gorge, and the rare moss upon the boulders, when he tried it at last in desperation, was good to eat.

He groped about among the tombs that ran down the gorge, seeking vaguely for some clue to these inexplicable things. After a long time he came to the entrance of the big mausoleum-like building from which the heads had issued. In this he found a group of green lights burning upon a kind of basaltic altar, and a bell-rope from a belfry overhead hanging down into the centre of the place. Round the wall ran a lettering of fire in a character unknown to him. While he was still wondering at the purport of these things, he heard the receding tramp of heavy feet echoing far down the street. He ran out into the darkness again, but he could see nothing. He had a mind to pull the bell-rope, and finally decided to follow the footsteps. But, although he ran far, he never overtook them; and his shouting was of no avail. The gorge seemed to extend an interminable distance. It was as dark as earthly starlight throughout its length, while the ghastly

green day lay along the upper edge of its precipices. There were none of the heads, now, below. They were all, it seemed, busily occupied along the upper slopes. Looking up, he saw them drifting hither and thither, some hovering stationary, some flying swiftly through the air. It reminded him, he said, of "big snowflakes"; only these were black and pale green.

In pursuing the firm, undeviating footsteps that he never overtook, in groping into new regions of this endless devil's dyke, in clambering up and down the pitiless heights, in wandering about the summits, and in watching the drifting faces, Plattner states that he spent the better part of seven or eight days. He did not keep count, he says. Though once or twice he found eyes watching him, he had word with no living soul. He slept among the rocks on the hillside. In the gorge things earthly were invisible, because, from the earthly standpoint, it was far underground. On the altitudes, so soon as the earthly day began, the world became visible to him. He found himself sometimes stumbling over the dark green rocks, or arresting himself on a precipitous brink, while all about him the green branches of the Sussexville lanes were swaying; or, again, he seemed to be walking through the Sussexville streets, or watching unseen the private business of some household. And then it was he discovered, that to almost every human being in our world there pertained some of these drifting heads; that every one in the world is watched intermittently by these helpless disembodiments.

What are they—these Watchers of the Living? Plattner never learned. But two, that presently found and followed him, were like his childhood's memory of his father and mother. Now and then other faces turned their eyes upon him: eyes like those of dead people who had swayed him, or injured him, or helped him in his youth and manhood. Whenever they looked at him, Plattner was overcome with a strange sense of responsibility. To his mother he ventured to speak, but she made no answer. She looked sadly, steadfastly, and tenderly—a little reproachfully, too, it seemed—into his eyes.

**H**E simply tells this story: he does not endeavor to explain. We are left to surmise who these Watchers of the Living may be, or, if they are indeed the Dead, why they should so closely and passionately watch a world they have left forever. It may be—in fact to my mind it seems just—that, when our life has closed, when evil or good is no longer a choice for us, we may still have to witness the working out of the train of consequences we have laid. If human souls continue after death, then surely human interests continue after death. But that is merely my own guess at the meaning of the things seen. Plattner offers no interpretation, for none was given him. It is well the reader should understand this clearly. Day after day, with his head reeling, he wandered about in this strange world outside the world, weary and, towards the end, weak and hungry. By day—by our earthly day, that is—the ghostly vision of the old familiar scenery of Sussexville, all about him, irked and wor-

ried him. He could not see where to put his feet, and ever and again with a chilly touch one of these Watching Souls would come against his face. And after dark the multitude of these Watchers about him, and their intent distress, confused his mind beyond describing. A great longing to return to the earthly life that was so near and yet so remote consumed him. The unearthliness of things about him produced a positively painful mental distress. He was worried beyond describing by his own particular followers. He would shout at them to desist from staring at him, scold at them, hurry away from them. They were always mute and intent. Run as he might over the uneven ground, they followed his destinies.

On the ninth day, towards evening, Plattner heard the invisible footsteps approaching, far away down the gorge. He was then wandering over the broad crest of the same hill upon which he had fallen in his entry into this strange Other-World of his. He turned to hurry down into the gorge, feeling his way hastily, and was arrested by the sight of the thing that was happening in a room in a back street near the school. Both of the people in the room he knew by sight. The windows were open, the blinds up, and the setting sun shone clearly into it, so that it came out quite brightly at first, a vivid oblong of room, lying like a magic-lantern picture upon the black landscape and the livid green dawn. In addition to the sunlight, a candle had just been lit in the room.

On the bed lay a lank man, his ghastly white face terrible upon the tumbled pillow. His clenched hands were raised above his head. A little table beside the bed carried a few medicine bottles, some toast and water, and an empty glass. Every now and then the lank man's lips fell apart, to indicate a word he could not articulate. But the woman did not notice that he wanted anything, because she was busy turning out papers from an old-fashioned bureau in the opposite corner of the room. At first the picture was very vivid indeed, but as the green dawn behind it grew brighter and brighter, so it became fainter and more and more transparent.

As the echoing footsteps paced nearer and nearer, those footsteps that sound so loud in that Other-World and come so silently in this, Plattner perceived about him a great multitude of dim faces gathering together out of the darkness and watching the two people in the room. Never before had he seen so many of the Watchers of the Living. A multitude had eyes only for the sufferer in the room, another multitude, in infinite anguish, watched the woman as she hunted with greedy eyes for something she could not find. They crowded about Plattner, they came across his sight and buffeted his face, the noise of their unavailing regrets was all about him. He saw clearly only now and then. At other times the picture quivered dimly, through the veil of green reflections upon their movements. In the room it must have been very still, and Plattner says the candle flame streamed up into a perfectly vertical line of smoke, but in his ears each footfall and its echoes beat like a clap of thunder. And the faces! Two, more particularly near the woman's: one a woman's also, white and clear-featured, a face

which might have once been cold and hard, but which was now softened by the touch of a wisdom strange to earth. The other might have been the woman's father. Both were evidently absorbed in the contemplation of some act of hateful meanness, so it seemed, which they could no longer guard against and prevent. Behind were others, teachers, it may be, who had taught ill, friends whose influence had failed. And over the man, too—a multitude, but none that seemed to be parents or teachers! Faces that might once have been coarse, now purged to strength by sorrow! And in the forefront one face, a girlish one, neither angry nor remorseful, but merely patient and weary, and, as it seemed to Plattner, waiting for relief. His powers of description fail him at the memory of this multitude of ghastly countenances. They gathered on the stroke of the bell. He saw them all in the space of a second. It would seem that he was so worked on by his excitement that, quite involuntarily, his restless fingers took the bottle of green powder out of his pocket and held it before him. But he does not remember that.

**A**BRUPTLY the footsteps ceased. He waited for the next, and there was silence, and then, suddenly, cutting through the unexpected stillness like a keen, thin blade, came the first stroke of the bell. At that the multitudinous faces swayed to and fro, and a louder crying began all about him. The woman did not hear; she was burning something now in the candle flame. At the second stroke everything grew dim, and a breath of wind, icy cold, blew through the host of watchers. They swirled about him like an eddy of dead leaves in the spring, and at the third stroke something was extended through them to the bed. You have heard of a beam of light. This was like a beam of darkness, and looking again at it, Plattner saw that it was a shadowy arm and hand.

The green sun was now topping the black desolations of the horizon, and the vision of the room was very faint. Plattner could see that the white of the bed struggled, and was convulsed; and that the woman looked round over her shoulder at it, startled.

The cloud of watchers lifted high like a puff of green dust before the wind, and swept swiftly downward towards the temple in the gorge. Then suddenly Plattner understood the meaning of the shadowy black arm that stretched across his shoulder and clutched its prey. He did not dare turn his

head to see the Shadow behind the arm. With a violent effort, and covering his eyes, he set himself to run, made, perhaps, twenty strides, then slipped on a boulder and fell. He fell forward on his hands; and the bottle smashed and exploded as he touched the ground.

In another moment he found himself, stunned and bleeding, sitting face to face with Lidgett in the old walled garden behind the school.

There the story of Plattner's experiences ends. I have resisted, I believe successfully, the natural disposition of a writer of fiction to dress up incidents of this sort. I have told the thing as far as possible in the order in which Plattner told it to me. I have carefully avoided any attempt at style, effect, or construction. It would have been easy, for instance, to have worked the scene of the death-bed into a kind of plot in which Plattner might have been involved. But, quite apart from the objectionableness of falsifying a most extraordinary true story, any such trite devices would spoil, to my mind, the peculiar effect of this dark world, with its livid green illumination and its drifting Watchers of the Living, which, unseen and unapproachable to us, is yet lying all about us.

It remains to add that a death did actually occur in Vincent Terrace, just beyond the school garden, and, so far as can be proved, at the moment of Plattner's return. Deceased was a rate-collector and insurance agent. His widow, who was much younger than himself, married last month a Mr. Whymper, a veterinary surgeon of Allbeeding. As the portion of this story given here has in various forms circulated orally in Sussexville, she has consented to my use of her name, on condition that I make it distinctly known that she emphatically contradicts every detail of Plattner's account of her husband's last moments. She burnt no will, she says, although Plattner never accused her of doing so; her husband made but one will, and that just after their marriage. Certainly, from a man who had never seen it, Plattner's account of the furniture of the room was curiously accurate.

One other thing, even at the risk of an irksome repetition, I must insist upon, lest I seem to favor the credulous, superstitious view. Plattner's absence from the world for nine days is, I think, proved. But that does not prove his story. It is quite conceivable that even outside space hallucinations may be possible. That, at least, the reader must bear distinctly in mind.

THE END.

## The Master Mind of Mars

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

A New Story by the Master of Scientifiction.

(See Inside Back Cover)

# VON KEMPELEN and his DISCOVERY

By Edgar Allan Poe



They relate that, on finding himself taken, Von Kempelen seized the crucibles with both hands (which were encased in gloves that afterwards turned out to be ashenic) and threw the contents on the tiled floor.

AFTER the very minute and elaborate paper by Arago, to say nothing of the summary in *Silliman's Journal*, with the detailed statement just published by Lieutenant Maury, it will not be supposed, of course, that in offering a few hurried remarks in reference to Von Kempelen's discovery, I have any design to look at the subject in a scientific point of view. My object is simply, in the first place, to say a few words of Von Kempelen himself (with whom, some years ago, I had the honor of a slight personal acquaintance), since everything

which concerns him must necessarily, at this moment, be of interest; and, in the second place, to look in a general way, and speculatively, at the results of the discovery.

It may be as well, however, to premise the cursory observations which I have to offer, by denying, very decidedly, what seems to be a general impression (gleaned, as usual in a case of this kind, from the newspapers), viz.: that this discovery, astounding as it unquestionably is, is unanticipated.

By reference to the "Diary of Sir Humphry Davy" (Cottle & Munroe, London, pp. 150) it will

## AMAZING STORIES

be seen at pp. 53 and 82, that this illustrious chemist had not only conceived the idea now in question, but had made no inconsiderable progress, experimentally, in the very identical analysis now so triumphantly brought to an issue by Von Kempelen, who although he makes not the slightest allusion to it, is, without doubt (I say it unhesitatingly, and can prove it, if required), indebted to the "Diary" for at least the first hint of his own undertaking. Although a little technical, I cannot refrain from appending two passages from the "Diary," with one of Sir Humphry's equations. [As we have not the algebraic signs necessary, and as the "Diary" is to be found at the Athenaeum Library, we omit here a small portion of Mr. Poe's manuscript.—ED.]

The paragraph from the *Courier and Enquirer*, which is now going the rounds of the press, and which purports to claim the invention for a Mr. Kissam, of Brunswick, Me., appears to me, I confess, a little apocryphal, for several reasons; although there is nothing either impossible or very improbable in the statement made. I need not go into details. My opinion of the paragraph is founded principally upon its *manner*. It does not look true. Persons who are narrating facts are seldom so particular as Mr. Kissam seems to be, about day and date and precise location. Besides, if Mr. Kissam actually did come upon the discovery, he says he did, at the period designated—nearly eight years ago—how happens it that he took no steps, *on the instant*, to reap the immense benefits which the merest bumpkin must have known would have resulted to him individually, if not to the world at large, from the discovery? It seems to me quite incredible that any man, of common understanding, could have discovered what Mr. Kissam says he did, and yet have subsequently acted so like a baby—so like an owl—as Mr. Kissam admits that he did. By the way, who is Mr. Kissam? and is not the whole paragraph in the *Courier and Enquirer* a fabrication got up to "make a talk?" It must be confessed that it has an amazingly moon-hoax-y air. Very little dependence is to be placed upon it, in my humble opinion; and if I were not well aware, from experience, how very easily men of science are mystified on points out of their usual range of inquiry, I should be profoundly astonished at finding so eminent a chemist as Professor Draper discussing Mr. Kissam's (or is it Mr. Quizzem's?) pretensions to this discovery, in so serious a tone.

But to return to the "Diary" of Sir Humphry Davy. This pamphlet was not designed for the public eye, even upon the decease of the writer, as any person at all conversant with authorship may satisfy himself at once by the slightest inspection of the style. At page 13, for example, near the middle, we read, in reference to his researches, about the protoxide of azote: "In less than half a minute the respiration being continued, diminished gradu-

ally and were succeeded by analogous to gentle pressure on all the muscles." That the *respiration* was not "diminished," is not only clear by the subsequent context, but by the use of the plural, "were." The sentence, no doubt, was thus intended: "In less than half a minute, the respiration [being continued, these feelings] diminished gradually, and were succeeded by [a sensation] analogous to gentle pressure on all the muscles." A hundred similar instances go to show that the MS. so inconsiderately published, was merely a *rough note-book*, meant only for the writer's own eye; but an inspection of the pamphlet will convince almost any thinking person of the truth of my suggestion. The fact is, Sir Humphry Davy was about the last man in the world to *commit himself* on scientific topics. Not only had he a more than ordinary dislike to quackery, but he was morbidly afraid of *appearing* empirical; so that, however fully he might have been convinced that he was on the right track in the matter now in question, he would never have spoken *out*, until he had everything ready for the most practical demonstration. I verily believe that his last moments would have been rendered wretched, could he have suspected that his wishes in regard to burning this "Diary" (full of crude speculations) would have been unattended to; as, it seems, they were. I say "his wishes," for that he meant to include this note-book among the miscellaneous papers directed "to be burnt," I think there can be no manner of doubt. Whether it escaped the flames by good fortune or by bad, yet remains to be seen. That the passage quoted above, with the other similar ones referred to, gave Von Kempelen the *hint*, I do not in the slightest degree question; but I repeat, it yet remains to be seen whether this momentous discovery itself (*momentous* under any circumstances), will be of service or disservice to mankind at large. That Von Kempelen and his immediate friends will reap a rich harvest, it would be folly to doubt for a moment. They will scarcely

be so weak as not to "realize" in time, by large purchases of houses and land, with other property of intrinsic value.

In the brief account of Von Kempelen which appeared in the *Home Journal*, and has since been extensively copied, several misapprehensions of the German original seem to have been made by the translator, who professes to have taken the pas-

sage from a late number of the Presburg *Schnellpost*. "Viele" has evidently been misconceived (as it often is), and what the translator renders by "sorrows," is probably "*Leiden*," which, in its true version, "sufferings," would give a totally different complexion to the whole account; but, of course, much of this is merely guess, on my part.

Von Kempelen, however, is by no means a misanthrope," in appearance, at least, whatever he may be in fact. My acquaintance with him was casual altogether; and I am scarcely warranted in saying that I know him at all; but to have seen and con-

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*RECENTLY, we were reading in the daily papers and in the scientific journals, about the transmutation of mercury into gold. With our present theories of chemistry, this appears to us to be not only a possibility, but even a probability. In this story Edgar Allan Poe once more appears in the rôle of scientific prophet—a rôle which he so often filled. What he describes in this story, written nearly a century ago, is just such a transmutation as the German chemist claims to have done—namely, the transmutation of mercury into gold. And Poe, in his inimitable style, makes it mighty interesting reading.*

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versed with a man of so *prodigious* a notoriety as he has attained, or *will* attain in a few days, is not a small matter, as times go.

The *Literary World* speaks of him, confidently, as a *native* of Presburg (misled, perhaps, by the account in the *Home Journal*), but I am pleased in being able to state *positively*, since I have it from his own lips, that he was born in Utica, in the State of New York, although both his parents, I believe, are of Presburg descent. The family is connected, in some way, with Mälze, of Automaton-chess-player memory. [If we are not mistaken, the name of the *inventor* of the chess-player was either KempeLEN, Von Kempelen, or something like it.—ED.] In person he is short and stout, with large, fat, blue eyes, sandy hair and whiskers, a wide but pleasing mouth, fine teeth, and I think a Roman nose. There is some defect in one of his feet. His address is frank, and his whole manner noticeable for *bon-hommie*. Altogether, he looks, speaks, and acts as little like a "misanthrope" as any man I ever saw. We were fellow-sojourners for a week, about six years ago, at Earl's Hotel, in Providence, Rhode Island; and I presume that I conversed with him, at various times, for some three or four hours altogether. His principal topics were those of the day; and nothing that fell from him led me to suspect his scientific attainments. He left the hotel before me, intending to go to New York, and thence to Bremen; it was in the latter city that this great discovery was first made public; or, rather, it was there that he was first suspected of having made it. This is about all that I personally know of the now immortal Von Kempelen; but I have thought that even these few details would have interest for the public.

There can be little question that most of the marvelous rumors afloat about this affair, are pure inventions, entitled to about as much credit as the story of Aladdin's lamp; and yet, in a case of this kind, as in the case of the discoveries in California, it is clear that the truth *may* be stranger than fiction. The following anecdote, at least, is so well authenticated, that we may receive it implicitly.

Von Kempelen had never been even tolerably well off during his residence at Bremen; and often, it was well known, he had been put to extreme shifts, in order to raise trifling sums. When the great excitement occurred about the forgery on the house of Gutsmuth & Co., suspicion was directed toward Von Kempelen, on account of his having purchased a considerable property in Gasperitch Lane, and his refusing, when questioned, to explain how he became possessed of the purchase-money. He was at length arrested, but nothing decisive appearing against him, was in the end set at liberty. The police, however, kept a strict watch upon his movements, and thus discovered that he left home frequently, taking always the same road, and invariably giving his watchers the slip in the neighborhood of that labyrinth of narrow and crooked passages known by the flash name of the "Dondergat." Finally, by dint of great perseverance, they traced him to a garret in an old house of seven stories, in an alley called Flätplatz; and, coming upon him suddenly, found him, as they imagined, in the midst of his counterfeiting operations. His agitation is represented as so excessive that the officers had

not the slightest doubt of his guilt. After handcuffing him, they searched his room, or rather rooms; for it appears he occupied all the *mansarde*.

Opening into the garret where they caught him, was a closet, ten feet by eight, fitted up with some chemical apparatus, of which the object has not yet been ascertained. In one corner of the closet was a very small furnace, with a glowing fire in it, and on the fire a kind of duplicate crucible—two crucibles connected by a tube. One of these crucibles was nearly full of *lead* in a state of fusion, but not reaching up to the aperture of the tube, which was close to the brim. The other crucible had some liquid in it, which, as the officers entered, seemed to be furiously dissipating in vapor. They relate that, on finding himself taken, Von Kempelen seized the crucibles with both hands (which were encased in gloves that afterwards turned out to be asbestic), and threw the contents on the tiled floor. It was now that they handcuffed him; and, before proceeding to ransack the premises, they searched his person, but nothing unusual was found about him, excepting a paper parcel, in his coat pocket, containing what was afterward ascertained to be a mixture of antimony and some *unknown substance*, in nearly, but not quite, equal proportions. All attempts at analyzing the unknown substance have, so far, failed, but that it will ultimately be analyzed, is not to be doubted.

Passing out of the closet with their prisoner, the officers went through a sort of ante-chamber, in which nothing material was found, to the chemist's sleeping-room. They here rummaged some drawers and boxes, but discovered only a few papers, of no importance, and some good coin, silver and gold. At length, looking under the bed, they saw a *large, common hair trunk*, without *hinges, hasp or lock*, and with the top lying carelessly across the bottom portion. Upon attempting to drag this trunk out from under the bed, they found that, with their united strength (there were three of them, all powerful men), they "could not stir it one inch." Much astonished at this, one of them crawled under the bed, and looking into the trunk, said:

"No wonder we couldn't move it—why it's full to the brim of old bits of brass!"

Putting his feet, now against the wall, so as to get a good purchase, and pushing with all his force, while his companions pulled with all theirs, the trunk, with much difficulty, was slid out from under the bed, and its contents examined. The supposed brass with which it was filled was all in small, smooth pieces, varying from the size of a pea to that of a dollar; but the pieces were irregular in shape, although all more or less flat looking, upon the whole, "very much as lead looks when thrown upon the ground in a molten state, and there suffered to grow cool." Now, not one of these officers for a moment suspected this metal to be anything but brass. The idea of its being *gold* never entered the brain, of course; how could such a wild fancy have entered it? And their astonishment may be well conceived, when next day it became known, all over Bremen, that the "lot of brass" which they had carted so contemptuously to the police office, without putting themselves to the trouble of pocketing the smallest scrap, was not only *gold*—real gold—but gold far finer than any employed in coinage—

gold, in fact, absolutely pure, virgin, without the slightest appreciable alloy!

I need not go over the details of Von Kempelen's confession (as far as it went) and release, for these are familiar to the public. That he had actually realized, in spirit and in effect, if not to the letter, the old chimera of the philosopher's stone, no sane person is at liberty to doubt. The opinions of Arago are, of course, entitled to the greatest consideration; but he is by no means infallible; and what he says of *bismuth*, in his report to the academy, must be taken *cum grano salis*. The simple truth is, that up to this period, *all* analysis has failed; and until Von Kempelen chooses to let us have the key to his own published enigma, it is more than probable that the matter will remain, for years, *in statu quo*. All that yet can fairly be said to be known, is that "pure gold can be made at will, and very readily, from lead, in connection with certain other substances, in kind and in proportions, unknown."

Speculation, of course, is busy as to the immediate and ultimate results of this discovery—a discovery which few thinking persons will hesitate in referring to an increased interest in the matter of gold generally, by the late developments in California; and this reflection brings us inevitably to

THE END

## The Ether Ship of Oltor

By MAXWELL S. CODER  
*(Continued)*

TINY green points of light appeared at various points in the city, at first no more than faint luminous emanations. Gradually they increased in length, if not in intensity, until they became wavering columns of phosphorescent mist, rising straight upward, while at a great distance overhead, the sphere became visible, shining with a ghastly glow. As the seconds passed, a strong wind was felt springing up. The phosphorescent columns now grew taller rapidly, suddenly being met by green streamers from the sphere, and the connecting bands of light waved back and forth like seaweed in the swell of the ocean. The wind increased in volume, becoming a cold blast, coming from everywhere, roaring ominously. Its course was upward, toward the glowing fire ball in the sky. The airships were midway between the green emanating devices and the suspended receiving ball. Too quickly for them to make their escape, they were carried upward by the terrific force of the ascending current of air, which had assumed the proportions of a tropical world hurricane. Turning and twisting, the ships were blown crashing together as they reached the center of the disturbance. Striking the ball, they split and spewed figures, pieces of metal, machinery. The ball was destroyed, the green light vanished, and gradually the air tumult subsided. Those ships which escaped annihilation made off toward their home land as though the devil were after them. For a while the red men triumphantly swept the sky and the earth with searchlights, then repaired to an assembly room to discuss plans for the next day's expedition into enemy country. Oltor was unani-

another—the exceeding *inopportuneness* of Von Kempelen's analysis. If many were prevented from adventuring to California, by the mere apprehension that gold would so materially diminish in value, on account of its plentifullness in the mines there, as to render the speculation of going so far in search of it a doubtful one—what impression will be wrought now, upon the minds of those about to emigrate, and especially upon the minds of those actually in the mineral region, by the announcement of this astounding discovery of Von Kempelen? a discovery which declares, in so many words, that beyond its intrinsic worth for manufacturing purposes (whatever that worth may be), gold now is, or at least soon will be (for it cannot be supposed that Von Kempelen can *long* retain his secret) of no greater value than lead, and of far inferior value to silver. It is indeed, exceedingly difficult to speculate prospectively upon the consequences of the discovery; but one thing may be positively maintained—that the announcement of the discovery six months ago would have had material influence in regard to the settlement of California.

In Europe, the most noticeable results have been a rise of two hundred per cent. in the price of lead, and nearly twenty-five per cent. in that of silver.

THE END

mously elected leader of the trip. His *sphere*, the experimental model that had preceded the present interplanetary vessel, had saved the city.

At noon following, the liner *Femorus* was ready. Below decks, men peered from windows made of the rock. Tubes and other contrivances were arranged to emit their death dealing beams from the front of the vessel. Atomic engines replaced the electric motors of the engine rooms, and after a trip made at a speed never before approached in the *Femorus'* history, the far shore of the southern sea appeared over the horizon. A cruise along the coast brought them to a great city, built on the hilltops at the water's edge. Several airships met the vessel, following overhead and making the water hiss all around, without noticeably affecting the men inside. Then figures appeared on the towers, manning larger machines. In that concentration of destructive rays, the liner became almost unbearably hot.

"The intermolecular strain is not great enough to disrupt the steel, but we shall be helpless from heat, if we can't end the struggle soon." Esma wiped his streaming face.

"It will end soon, and the poor creatures haven't got a chance," replied Oltor. "Man the tubes!"

Several bluish beams shot up from the windows to the towers. "Staunton, you can see where we would be if we had attempted to take the offensive without using your discovery of this morning. Having these transparent windows, we are going to put every machine in that city out of business. Look at them dropping."

On the tops of the structures in the city, the

men were affected in a most remarkable manner. Most of them fell off and crashed into the rocks below, while others seemed to go insane, jumping about, struggling with each other, throwing themselves violently from the edge.

"Yes, they do look like a bunch of maniacs." This from Oltor. "These tubes are somewhat similar to the one I had that day in the underground lake, built on a larger scale. They generate etheric waves, approaching, in length, those of thought. Depending on mental resistance and bodily conditions, they have different results. In that spider, death was instantaneous, while in human beings, the short-circuiting of mental impulse is not always complete, and death does not always ensue directly. Partial shunting of the life force causes insanity or paralysis. Unfortunately, the metal of the airships dissipates the energy of the rays, making them ineffective against those above us. I am going to try to get rid of them. They are getting lower, and this heat is becoming unbearable."

At what he considered the proper moment, Oltor manipulated a long lever which had been placed through the decks that morning, carrying a roughly concave steel plate, made from strips taken from the liner, on its upper end. As the plate was swung into position and rocked back and forth, one of the low hanging ships crumbled at one end, then fell into the water. Another fell, followed by two more. Their own rays, reflected back on them, played havoc with the Royan fleet. The *Femorus* had now reached the edge of the city. A long street just ahead, through the center of it, was crowded with fugitives, carrying pieces of

THE END.

metal and all kinds of utensils for protection from the death scourging their homes. The last opposing enemy machine, except those in the remaining airships, had ceased functioning.

"I cannot destroy a race as brave and intelligent as these people seem to be," declared Oltor. "They have shown no signs of fear, and they do not seem willing to surrender. In spite of the fact that hundreds are dying, insane or paralyzed, the others strive against us with what appears to be the only weapon they possess. Turn the tubes off!"

A signal asking for an armistice had come from one of the towers, the airships were called back, and a group of men came down to the water's edge for a parley. Oltor and several of his friends ascended to the deck, and stepped to the shore.

Oltor, that great soul, treated the vanquished race as friends. In a short communication, he pointed out the necessity of peace to prevent the peoples destroying each other; the advantages of exchange of knowledge between them. He offered them absolute equality with his race, and the result of the discussion was the Royas' acceptance of the friendship of the red peoples of Astarak.

A short time afterward, the ether ship was provisioned and stocked for another venture into interplanetary space. The spirit of the explorer had taken possession of Oltor, and he was determined to visit Venus, that planet of the impenetrable atmosphere.

"Well, fellows, we start in a week. No doubt you want to return to your own world, after such a long stay here, so I will drop you off there. I pass near."

Staunton, winking at Robinson, agreed with him.

## What Do You Know?

**R**EADERS of AMAZING STORIES have frequently commented upon the fact that there is more actual knowledge to be gained through reading its pages than in many a textbook. Moreover, most of the stories are written in a popular vein, making it possible for any one to grasp important facts.

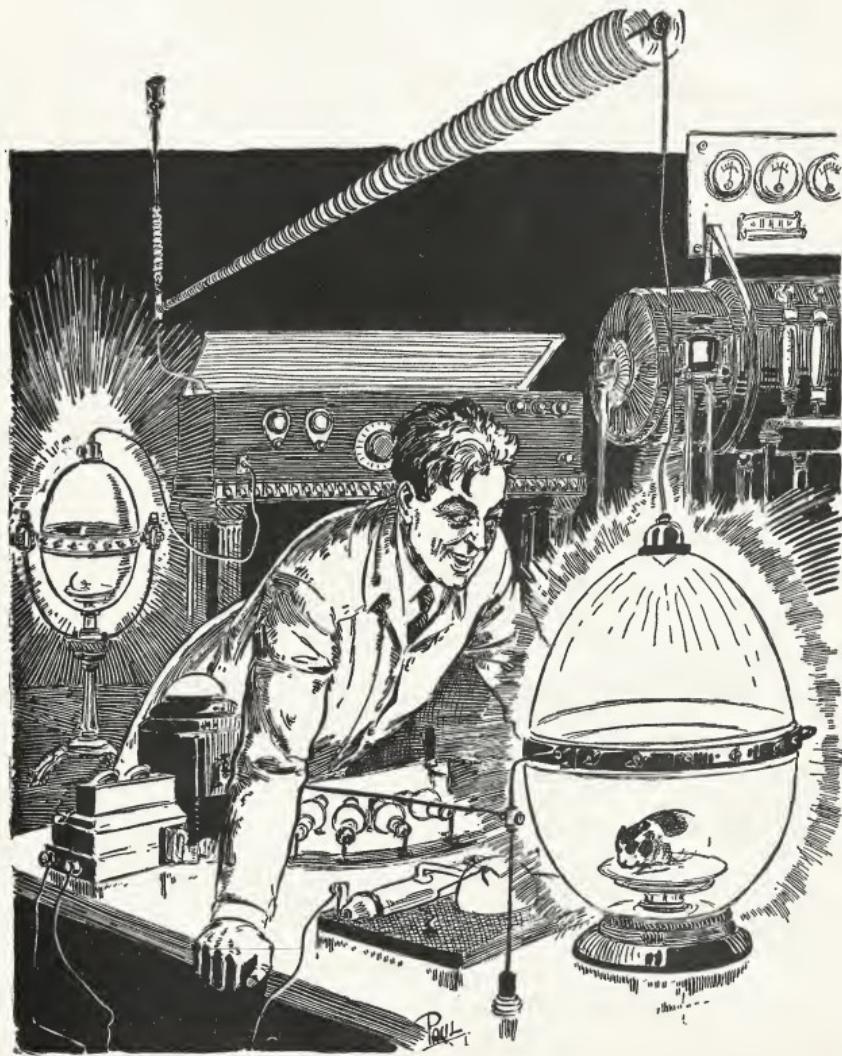
The questions which we give below are all answered on the pages as listed at the end of the questions. Please see if you can answer the questions first without looking for the answer, and see how well you check up on your general knowledge.

If you wish to see a questionnaire of this kind every month, do not fail to mark your reply on the voting coupon which you will find elsewhere. If there is sufficient demand for the questionnaire we will publish one every month.

1. If matter is to be sent through space by radio, what three steps may be suggested? (See page 371.)
2. What electronic device is suggested for use in cathode projectors? (See page 371.)
3. What kind of photographic portrait turns right into left? (See page 356.)
4. A teacher in elementary chemistry always shows his class experiments with carbon dioxide, hydrogen and oxygen. What is the unusual school teacher name for these elements? (See page 357.)
5. What is an imaginary quantity? (See page 340.)
6. What would be the effect of a great gyroscope in a flying body? (See page 311.)
7. What is an osmotic? (See page 343.)
8. What changes would you look for in the position of the stars, if you could go back in time? (See page 345.)
9. In what museum is a glass model of protozoans? (See page 352.)
10. What is one of the striking features of the Iguana lizard? (See page 333.)
11. Is it good chemistry to speak of "sulphur laden air"? (See page 336.)
12. Can you describe the modern notion of an atom? (See page 349.)
13. Where does cacophony occur in the music of a great musician? (See page 376.)
14. What fish, hearing an armor, goes back to the Devonian era? (See page 379.)
15. Who are the ancient semi-legendary tribes who are supposed to have lived in Ireland 40 centuries before the Christian era? (See page 382.)
16. What is a jelly-fish? Where is its place in zoology? (See page 385.)
17. What is hepta-chromatism of the rainbow and spectrum? (See page 391.)
18. What was the famous weapon of the Scandinavian divinity, from whom Thursday was named? (See page 401.)
19. What is mental telepathy? (See page 321.)
20. Could atomic disintegration produce power, and would a heavy metal be the best source of such power? (See page 322.)
21. What is Einstein's theory of gravitation? (See page 322.)

# RADIO MATES

*By Benjamin Witwer*



"Think of it! A twist of a switch and the living, breathing piglet slowly dissolved before my eyes and vanished along a pair of wires to my aerial, whence it was transferred as a set of waves in the ether to the receiving apparatus—there to reincarnate into the living organism once more, alive and breathing, unharmed by its extraordinary journey!"

**L**T was a large brown envelope, of the size commonly used for mailing pamphlets or catalogues. Yet it was registered, and had come by special messenger that afternoon, my landlady informed me. Probably it was a strain of that detective instinct which is present in most of us that delayed my opening the missive until I had carefully scrutinized the handwriting of the supercription. There was something vaguely familiar in its slanting exactitude, yet when I deciphered the postmark,—“Eastport, N. Y.”—I was still in the dark, for I could not remember ever having heard of the place before. As I turned the packet over, however, my pleasant tingle of anticipation was rudely chilled. Along the flap was a sinister row of black sealing wax blobs, which seemed to stare at me with a malignant fore-knowledge. On closer examination, I noticed that each seal retained the impression of a coat-of-arms, also elusively familiar.

With a strange sense of foreboding I dropped the missive on the table. Queer what ominous significance a few drops of wax can impart to an ordinary envelope. Deliberately I changed into smoking jacket and slippers, poked the well laid fire and lit a pipe before finally tearing open the seals.

There were many typewritten sheets, commencing in letter form:

54 Westervelt Ave.,  
Eastport, New York,  
February 15th.

Dear Cousin George:

Now that you have identified me by referring to my signature on the last page (which I had just done) you will no doubt wonder at the occasion for this rather effusive letter from one so long silent as I have been. The fact of the matter is that you are the only male relative with whom I can communicate at this time. My nephew, Ralph, is first officer of a freighter somewhere in the Caribbean, and Alfred Hutton, your mother's first cousin, has not been heard from since he embarked on that colonizing scheme in New Guinea, nearly a year ago.

I must do all in my power to prevent the bungling metropolitan police from implicating Howard Marsden in my disappearance. It would take no great stretch of the imagination to do just that, and were the State to require Marsden's life as forfeit for my own, then my carefully planned revenge would be utterly frustrated. I have been cultivating the village postmaster for some weeks, ever since this plan began to shape definitely in my mind. I am mailing this letter at three o'clock

this afternoon, for I have noticed that at that hour the postal section of the store is generally deserted. I shall ask him if his clock is correct, thus fixing the time in his mind. Please remember these points. Then I shall register this letter, taking care to exhibit the unusual collection of seals on the back. I shall manage to inform him also that I stamped the seals with my ring and will show him the coat-of-arms, explaining its meaning in detail. These villagers are a curiosity-ridden lot. Upon returning home, I shall drop this same ring into the inkwell which stands upon my desk. Finally I shall proffer my friend the postmaster a fifty-dollar bill in paying for my registry. The registry slip itself will be found within the hatband of my brown hat, which I shall place in the wall safe of my study.

You are becoming more amazed as you proceed, no doubt asking yourself if this letter is the product of a madman or a faker. Before you have finished you will probably be assured that both assumptions are correct. It matters little, for I will at least have firmly established the fact that this letter was mailed by no one else but me. As for the rest, Howard Marsden will corroborate what follows.

To begin at the beginning. As you know, or perhaps you do not know, for I forget that our correspondence has been negligible of late, five years ago I accompanied the Rodgers expedition into Afghanistan. We were officially booked as a geological mission, but were actually in search of radium, —among other things. When I left, I was practically engaged to Venice Potter, a distant relation of the Long Island Potters, of whom you have perhaps heard. I say “practically” engaged because the outcome of this expedition was to furnish me with the standing and position necessary for a formal demand for her hand. As I said, that was nearly five years ago.

Four months after my departure her letters ceased coming and mine were returned to me unopened. Two months later I received an announcement of her betrothal to Howard Marsden. Received it out there in Afghanistan, when I had returned to the coast for supplies. Well skip that next year,

during which I stuck with the expedition. We were successful. I returned.

Then I found out where the Marsdens were living, here in Eastport. I'd met Marsden once or twice in the old days, but paid him little attention at the time. He seemed but another of the moneyed idlers; had a comfortable income from his father's estate and was interested in “gentleman farming,”—blooded stock and the rest. I decided that it was useless to dig into dead ashes for the time being, at least until I could determine the lay

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*FROM the telegraph to the telephone was but a step. From the telephone to radio constituted but another such step, and we are now enjoying radio broadcast from stations thousands of miles away. Every time you have an X-ray photograph taken you are bombarded, not by rays, but by actual particles that go right through the walls of the tube, which particles are just as real as if they were bullets or bricks, the only difference being that they are smaller. Thus our scientists lead up to the way of sending solids through space. While impossible of achievement, as yet, it may be possible, years hence, to send living beings through space, to be received at distant points. At any rate, the author of this story weaves a fascinating romance around this idea. It makes excellent reading, and the plot is as unusual as is its entire treatment.*

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## AMAZING STORIES

of the land, so to speak. Meanwhile I had my researches to make, a theory I had evolved as a sort of backfire to fill that awful void of Venice's loss,—out there on the edge of the world. Countless sleepless nights I had spent in a feverish attempt to lose myself in scientific speculation. At last I believed I had struck a clue to conclusions until now entirely overlooked by eager searchers. I decided to establish my laboratory here in Eastport, perhaps devoting any leisure hours to an unravelling of that mystery of my sudden jilting. With a two-year-old beard and sunbaked complexion there were few who would have recognized me under my real name, and none in my assumed rôle of "Professor Walters."

**T**HUS it was that I leased an old house not half a mile from Marsden's pretentious "farm." I converted the entire ground floor into a laboratory, living in solitary state upon the upper floor. I was used to caring for myself, and the nature of my experiment being of such potentialities, I felt that I wanted no prying servants about me. Indeed, it has turned out to be of such international importance that I feel no compunction whatever in utilizing it for my own selfish ends. It could be a boon to humanity, yet its possibilities for evil in the hands of any individual or group is so great as to render it most dangerous to the happiness of the human kind on this small globe.

One day, some three months after I had taken up my residence in Eastport, I had a visitor. It was Marsden. He had been attracted by the sight of my novel aerial, just completed. By his own admission he was an ardent "radio fan," as they are popularly termed, I believe, and he spent the better part of an afternoon bragging of stations he had "logged" with his latest model radio set. Aside from my vague suspicions of his complicity in the alienation of my beloved Venice, I must admit that even then I felt an indefinable repulsion towards him. There was something intangibly unwholesome about him, a narrowness between the eyes which repelled me. Yet, although at that time I had no plan in mind, nevertheless I encouraged him in my most hospitable manner, for even thus early I felt, that at some time not far distant, I might be called upon to utilize this acquaintance-ship to my own advantage.

This first visit was followed by others, and we discussed radio in all its phases, for the man had more than a smattering of technical knowledge on the subject and was eager to learn more. At last, one day, I yielded to his insistence that I inspect his set and agreed to dine at his house the following evening. By now I felt secure in my disguise, and although I dreaded the moment when I should actually confront my lost love once more, yet I longed for the sweet pain of it with an intensity which a hard-shelled bachelor like you will never understand. Enough. I arrived at the Marsdens' the next evening and was duly presented to my hostess as "Thomas Walters." In spite of my private rehearsals I felt a wave of giddiness sweep over me as I clasped that small white hand in my own after the lapse of almost five years, for she was, if pos-

sible, lovelier than ever. I noted when my vision cleared that her eyes had widened as they met mine. I realized that my perturbation had been more apparent than I imagined and managed to mutter something about my alleged "weak heart," a grimmer jest by far than I intended. Frantically I fortified myself with remembrances of those barren days in Afghanistan, where I stayed on and on, impotent to raise a hand in the salvage of my heart's wreckage.

We chatted politely all through that interminable meal, no morsel of which aroused the faintest appreciation on my dry tongue. Finally the chairs were pushed back and my host excused himself to bring down some pieces of apparatus he had recently purchased, concerning which he professed to desire my invaluable opinion.

No sooner had he left the room than the polite smile dropped from Venice's face like a discarded mask.

"Dick," she cried, "what are you doing here?"

It was my first inkling that she suspected my true identity. I rallied quickly, however, and allowed my self-encouraged bitterness its outlet.

"Had I believed you would recognize me, *Mrs. Marsden*, I should not have inflicted my unwelcome presence upon you, I can assure you."

She bit her lips and her head raised with a jerk. Then her mouth softened again as her great eyes searched mine.

"Yes, but why—" she broke off at the sound of approaching footsteps. Suddenly she leaned forward. "Meet me in the pine grove to-morrow afternoon—four o'clock," she breathed. Then her husband entered.

The remainder of the evening I was forced to listen to Marsden's eager dissertation on the alleged "static eliminator" which had been foisted upon him on his last trip to the city. Mechanically I answered or grunted in simulated appreciation when a pause in his endless monologue warned me that some reply was expected of me; but my pulses were leaping in exultation because of the fleeting hope which those few words from my lost Venice had kindled. I could not imagine why the offer to bridge the breach of years should come from her so voluntarily, yet it was enough for me that she remembered and wished to see me. I cared not why.

I arrived nearly an hour early that next afternoon, for I had been unable either to sleep or work during the interim. I shall not bore you with the particulars of that meeting, even were I free to reveal such sacred details. Suffice to say that after the preliminaries of doubt and misunderstanding had been brushed away—and it was not the simple process this synopsis would seem to infer, I can assure you—I stood revealed as the victim of a most ingenious and thoroughly knavish plot. Boiled down, it resembles one of those early movie scenarios.

You remember I spoke of Venice as related to the Long Island Potters, a branch of the family highly rated in the Social Register? You will also remember that before I undertook that expedition I was never particularly certain whence my next

year's expenses were to be derived, nor to what extent, if you understand what I mean. At about the time I was preparing for this expedition which I hoped would make me financially and scientifically independent, this wealthy branch of the family seriously "took up" my darling Venice, inviting her to live with them that summer. I remember now all too late, that even during that confusion of mind caused by the agony of leaving my loved one, coupled with the feverish preparations for departure, chill clouds of censure came from the aloof Potters. They made no effort to mask their disapproval of my humble self and prospects, yet in my blindness I had never connected them intimately with what followed.

It was, in short, the old story of the ingenuous man-on-the-ground, the "good match," aided and abetted by the patronesses of the "poor relation." The discriminating Marsden naturally fell in love with Venice, and to his great surprise and chagrin, was decisively repulsed by her. Never before having been refused anything he really wanted in his comfortably arranged life, he became passionately desirous of possessing her. Accordingly, my darling was shown a letter, forged with such diabolical cleverness as to be almost indistinguishable from my own hand. It purported to intrigue me with a very ordinary female at a period coincident with the time I had been so fervently courting my dear one.

She refused to credit the document and dispatched me a voluminous explanation of the whole occurrence. Attributing my silence to the exigencies of distance, she continued to write me for over a month. When no answer arrived after nearly three long months, she at length delivered a hastily planned ultimatum, to which she was later persuaded to adhere through the combined pressure of Marsden and her family, beating against the razed defences of her broken heart. Then it was that I received the betrothal announcement, the only communication her watchful family had permitted to escape their net of espionage.

**A**S the story unfolded, my heart pounded with alternate waves of exaltation and red rage at the treacherous Marsden. Because of selfish duplicity, he had robbed us both of five years' happiness, for I had forced my darling's admission that she had never loved him, and now despised him as a common thief. My brief moment of delirious joy was sharply curtailed, however, when I came to press her to separate from this selfish swine. After some demur she confided that he was a drug addict. She said that he had been fighting desperately to break this habit ever since their marriage, for his jealous love of her was the only remaining weapon with which to combat his deep rooted vice. Deprived of his one motive, my darling earnestly assured me that it would be a matter of but a few short years before the white powders wrote *Finis* to yet another life. I could see but a balancing of an already overdrawn account in such an event, and said so in no uncertain terms. She did not chide me, merely patiently explained with sweet, sad resignation that she held

herself responsible for his very life for the present. That although she could not love and honor him as she had promised, yet she was bound to cleave to him during this, his "worse" hour. And so we left it for the time, our future clouded, yet with no locked door to bar the present from us.

We met almost daily, unless Marsden's activities interfered. At those times I was like a raging beast, unable to work, consumed with a livid hatred for the cunning thief who had stolen my love while my back was turned. I could not shake her resolution to terminate this loveless match, even though she now loathed the mate she had once tolerated. But in spite of the formlessness of our future, my work progressed as never before. Now my days were more than a mere procession of dates, for each was crowned with the glow of those few stolen moments with my darling Venice.

Came the day of my first complete success. Some weeks previously I had finally succeeded in transmitting a small wooden ball by radio. Perhaps I should say that I had "dissolved" it into its vibrations, for it was not until this later day that I had been able to materialize or "receive" it after it had been "sent." I see you start and re-read this last sentence. I mean just what I say, and Marsden will bear me out, for as you shall see, he has witnessed this and other such experiments here in my laboratory. I have explained to him as much as I wanted him to know of the process, in fact, just enough so that he believes that a little intensive research and experimentation on his part will make him master of my secret. But he is entirely ignorant of the most important element, as well as of the manner of its employment.

Yes, after years of study and interrupted experimental research I was enabled finally to disintegrate, without the aid of heat, a solid object into its fundamental vibrations, transmit these vibrations into the ether in the form of so-called "radio waves" which I then attracted and condensed in my "receiving" apparatus, slowly damping their short kinked vibration-rate until finally there was deposited the homogeneous whole, identical in outline and displacement,—entirely unharmed from its etheric transmigration!

My success in this, my life's dream, was directly the result of our discoveries on that bitter expedition into Afghanistan. All my life I had been interested in the study of vibrations, but had achieved no startling successes or keen expectations thereof until we stumbled upon that strange mineral deposit on what was an otherwise ill-fated trip for me. It was then that I realized that radioactive niton might solve my hitherto insurmountable difficulty in the transmission of material vibrations into electronic waves. My experiments thereafter, while successful to the degree that I discovered several entirely new principles of resonic harmonics, as well as an absolute refutation of the quantum theory of radiation, fell far short of my hoped-for goal. At that time I was including both helium and uranium in my improved cathode projectors, and it was not until I had effected a more sympathetic combination with thorium that I began to receive encouraging re-

suits. My final success came with the substitution of actinium for the uranium and the addition of polonium, plus a finer adjustment which I was able to make in the vortices of my three modified Tesla coils, whose limitations I had at first underrated. I was then enabled to filter my resonance waves into pitch with my "electronic radiate rays," as I called them, with the success I shall soon describe.

Of course, all this is no clearer than a page of Sanscrit to you, nor do I intend that it shall be otherwise. As I have said, such a secret is far too potent to be unloosed upon a world of such delicately poised nations, whose jaws are still reddened from their recent ravening. It needs no explanation of mine to envision the terrible possibilities for evil in the application of this great discovery. It shall go with me—to return at some future, more enlightened time after another equally single-minded investigator shall have stumbled upon it. It is this latter thought which has caused me to drop the hints that I have. My earnest hope is that you will permit the misguided Marsden to read the preceding paragraph. In it he will note a reference to an element which I have not mentioned to him before, and will enable him to obtain certain encouraging results,—encouraging but to further efforts, to more frantic attempts. But I digress.

With my success on inanimate objects, I plunged the more enthusiastically into my work. I should have lost all track of time but for my daily tryst with Venice. Her belief in me was the tonic which spurred me on to further efforts after each series of meticulously conducted experiments had crumbled into failure. It was the knowledge that she awaited me which alone upheld me in those dark moments of depression, which every searcher into the realms of the unknown must encounter.

Then came the night of November 28th, the Great Night. After countless failures, I finally succeeded in transmitting a live guinea pig through the atmosphere and "received" it, alive and well, in the corner of my laboratory. Think of it! A twist of a switch and the living, breathing piglet slowly dissolved before my eyes and vanished along a pair of wires to my aerial, whence it was transferred as a set of waves in the ether to the receiving apparatus,—there to reincarnate into the living organism once more, alive and breathing, unharmed by its extraordinary journey! That night I strode out into the open and walked until dawn suddenly impressed the gray world upon my oblivious exaltation, for I was King of the Universe, a Weaver of Miracles.

Then it was that my great plan began to take shape. With renewed energy I began the construction of a mammoth transmitter. At intervals I "transmitted" stray cats and dogs of every description, filling several books with notes wherein I recorded minutely the varying conditions of my subjects before transmission. Invariably their condition upon being "cohered" in the receiving tube, was excellent. In some cases, indeed, minor ailments had entirely disappeared during their short passage through the ether. What a study for the medical profession!

I had, of course, told Venice the object of my researches long ago, but had never brought her to my laboratory for reasons of discretion. One afternoon, however, I slipped her in under cover of the heavy downpour. After I had warmed her with a cup of tea, before her astonished eyes I transmitted an old she-cat which was afflicted with some sort of rheumatism or paralysis of its hind legs. When its form began to reappear in the transparent receiving tube, my darling gasped in awed wonder. She was rendered utterly speechless, however, when I switched off the current and released the animal from its crystal prison. And no wonder, for it gambolled about like a young kitten, all trace of its former malady having entirely disappeared! The impression upon Venice was all that I had hoped for, and when I at length escorted her out into the dusk, I felt her quick, awed glances flickering over me like the reverence of a shy neophyte for the high priest.

**A**LL was set for the final act. I literally hurled myself into the completion of my improved set. The large quantities of certain minerals required caused me an unexpected delay. This I filled with demonstrations in the presence of Marsden, whom I was encouraging as a fellow radio enthusiast,—with considerable unexpected histrionic ability on my part. It was so hard to keep my fingers off his throat! I pretended to explain to him the important factors of my great secret, and drilled him in the mechanical operation of the sets. I had divulged to him also that my greatest desire was to demonstrate my principle on a human being, and like all great scientific explorers, proposed to offer myself as the subject. Venice had strenuously opposed the proposal until the demonstration on the diseased cat, and even now viewed the entire proposition with alarm. Yet I insisted that unless applied to human beings my entire work went for naught, and I finally succeeded in quieting her fears to a great extent.

At last I am ready. I have told my darling how it is impossible to transmit anything metallic by the very nature of the conflicting rays encountered. I have bemoaned the fact that, due to the softness of my teeth since boyhood, my mouth is one mass of metallic fillings and crowns, rendering it impossible for me to test the efficiency of my life's work. As I had hoped, she has volunteered herself as the subject for the great experiment, for her white teeth are as yet innocent of fillings. I have demurred and refused to listen to the idea, permitting myself to be won over only after days of earnest argument on her part. We are not to tell Marsden, for there is no doubt that his fanatical love for her would refuse to tolerate the mere suggestion.

Tonight it shall be accomplished. There is no other way, for that accursed husband of hers seems to progress in neither direction. He will be nothing but a mud-buried anchor until the end of her days, while I—I love her. What other excuse need be offered?

But to the facts. At eight o'clock that drug-soaked love pirate comes to officiate at my trans-

mission through space. I shall meet him with a chloroformed soaked rag. Later he will awake to find himself effectively gagged, with his hands and feet firmly shackled to the wall of a dark corner of my laboratory. These shackles consist of armatures across the poles of large electro-magnets which I have embedded in the walls. At 10:30, a time switch will cut off the current, releasing the wretch, for, above all things, he must live. I debated sending a message for his chauffeur to call for him here at the designated hour. I have decided rather to trust to mechanical certitude than lay my plan open to frustration because of some human vagary.

At nine o'clock Venice comes for the great experiment. Marsden has told her that he will remain in the city over night, at my suggestion, so that in case I fail to materialize after being "sent" he cannot be held in connection with my disappearance. She does not know that I have had my teeth extracted and have been using India rubber plates for nearly a month. By the time she has arrived, the effects of the chloroform will have entirely worn off from my would-be assistant, and I shall have had plenty of time to introduce myself properly to him and explain the evening's program which has been so carefully arranged for his benefit.

Then he will have the excruciating pleasure of watching his beloved wife dissolve into—*nothingness!* Soon thereafter he will witness the same process repeated upon myself, for I have so adapted the apparatus that I need no outside assistance other than a time-clock to actuate the mechanism! Then, at the appointed hour, the current will be shut off and the frenzied wretch will rush to the distant switch controlling the receiving apparatus. As he throws the metal bars into their split receptacles there will come a blinding flash, and behold—the apparatus will have disappeared in a puff of crystalline particles! The secret has returned whence it came!

Then will come that personally prepared hell for my mean spirited forger. As I told you, he believes that he is in possession of enough of the details of my secret to reconstruct the apparatus and duplicate my success. The added details of this letter will assure him into an idiotic confidence

which will lead him on and on through partially successful attempts. I know that no matter whether you sympathize with my actions or not (and I am sure that you do not, for you never have), your sense of justice will force you to show this letter to the proper authorities in order to prevent a fatal bungling.

Meanwhile that miserable sneak will be frenzied with the knowledge that at last, the lover he so long cheated of his loved one is now with her, alone,—where he, her lawful husband, can never follow. And we shall be together, unchanged, awaiting the day when some other enlightened mortal solves Nature's riddle, when we shall once more assume our earthly forms, unhindered by other selfish man-beasts.

Farewell,  
BROMLEY CRANSTON.

\* \* \* \* \*

**N**EEDLESS to say, I hurried to Eastport. But my trip was unnecessary. I found Harold Marsden in a "private sanitarium" for the hopelessly insane. There all day, and as far into the night as the opiates would permit him, he is to be found seated before a radio set, the earphones clamped to his head—listening. His statements, methodically filed away by the head of the place, corresponded wildly with the prophecies of my strange letter. Now he was listening to fragmentary messages from those two he had seen precipitated into space, he maintained. Listening.

And they had disappeared, utterly. I found the large seal ring in the inkwell on the desk. Also the slip in the hatband of the hat which had been placed in the wall safe, unlocked. The postmaster remembered the seals on the letter my cousin had mailed, and the approximate time he had received it. I felt my own reason wavering.

That is why, fantastic as is the whole affair, I cannot yet bear the sound of one of those radio loud speakers. It is when that inarticulate sound they call "static" occurs, when fragments of words and sentences seem to be painfully attempting to pierce a hostile medium,—that I picture that hunched up figure with its spidery earphones,—listening. Listening. For what?

THE END.

### OF THEIR OWN HAVE WE GIVEN THEN

By Leland S. Copeland

Out of a thousand thousand suns,  
Into the world and me,  
Comes a strength that radiant stars  
Age after age set free.  
Might of centuries long since dead,  
Arriving ray on ray,  
Gives to the frame and mind of men  
Subtle power to-day.

Out of strife of earthly tribes,  
Forth from the moil and me,  
Hastens the strength of yesterday,  
Seeking Infinity;  
Silently darts to globe and star,  
Wrapped in darkness or day,  
Or sinks in the fluff of nebulae,  
Far forever away.

# *The MOON POOL*

*-By A. Merritt-*

Author of "The People of the Pit."



I heard Yolara scream! . . . Between the three of us and them was a ring of curdled moon flames, swirling about the Shining One and its priestess, pressing in upon them, enfolding them! . . . Sparks and flames and flashes of white flame darted from the ring, penetrating the radiant swathings of the Dweller, striking through its pulsing nucleus, piercing its seven crowning orbs. The dwarfs who had watched that terror turned and ran, racing frantically over the bridge toward the cavern mouth.

## What Went Before

WHILE sitting aboard the *SOUTHERN QUEEN*, fighting the minister spell of *Papua*, Dr. Walter T. Goodwin recovers in the tall mast, coming up the plank, one of his oldest friends, singularly changed. Only one month earlier, Dr. David Throckmorton had set forth for *Nomadotis*, an extraordinary group of island ruins along the eastern shore of *Ponape* in the Carolines, together with his wife Edith, Dr. Roderick Shadwell, his young associate, and Thora Halvorson, a Swedish woman, *Edith's nurse*.

In Throckmorton's cabin that evening, Dr. Goodwin, the narrator of the story, learns the reason for the strange change; he learns about another world, alien and unfamiliar, a world of terror, whose unknown joy is the greatest terror. Dr. Goodwin, who has made his victim the path of the moon streams; of the fate of Edith and Shadwell and Thora. And later, as though in answer to an irresistible call, Throckmorton disappears out of his cabin into the night.

Dr. Goodwin goes to Melbourne in the hope of getting a rescue party, though he realizes that the very first wind would scatter his friend's ship on the moon rocks. En route for *Papua* he passes the *Nan-Matal*, on the *SUWARNA*, they sight the *BRUNHILDA*, on which they see its captain, Olaf Huldrickson, lashed to the wheel, in a hideous state. They learn that he had tied himself to the wheel in order to save the *Dragon*. That night when Olaf becomes sufficiently calm and trusting that the *Dragon* has claimed his beloved child, when the moon was high, and now he is in search of "The Sparking Devil." Goodwin tells him he is bent on a like mission.

Larry O'Keefe, American and Irish, has implicit faith in the "boobies," an Irish legendary woman spirit, warning of approaching death by her cries, but is curiously free from most other superstitions. After a long talk with Dr. Goodwin, he decides to pool his lot with Goodwin and Olaf.

After many adventures, they reach *Ponape*, where, with the aid of the maps which Throckmorton had left them, they find the *Nan-Matal* and the entrance to the Moon Pool. In the full moon, they wait, with automatons ready, for the rock to open and the Dweller to come forth. After a long wait the rock opens and shows a short hole, and there discloses German scientists, Von Hetendorf, who is there to find the secret of life for Germany. He realizes that they all could do more than he alone, so they tell them what he has learned of the place and they tell what they know of it.

Von Hetendorf tells them that the rock remains open for at least three hours, enough time to go within to investigate. They see Huldrickson partly submerged in the water, holding a small child just suspended from his hands. They pull him out and the Germans coat him with some specially prepared liquid, which neutralizes the burns of radium and X-rays, given by the radioactive liquid in the Moon Pool.

They explore along the terrace and come to another wall on which is a rough stone figure, much heavily designed than the others. As they look on, they notice a great oval begin to glow, and almost to a

glow and shine out as though a light were streaming through the stone itself. Gradually the shadow thickens and suddenly two figures stand before them—one a golden-eyed girl and the other a grotesque frog woman. Thus come Laska, handmaiden of the *Silent Ones*, to show them the way to the interior.

As he directed, Larry presses his fingers on the circles on the wall and over the wind sinks to a roar; then the roof vanishes, disappears, and the floor opens a vast tremor splits the earth apart. When they get off the car, they see a sparkling nebula rising into infinite distances. Miles away, gigantic luminous cliffs spring sheer from the limits of a lake whose waters are of milky opalescence. With them in the lead, they march further toward another entrance. With them are the by-products of their journey—Larry, the scientist, Rador, the leader of the dwarfs, brings them to the Princess Yolara, priestess of the *Shining One* and *Lugur*, its Voice.

They are questioned about their means of entrance and the outer world. Dr. Goodwin is taken through *Muras* in the meantime. It is kept by Yolara, who has never been left with him. Later they both see the work of the *Keta*, a creature that always points to some object or being, causes it to vanish into nothingness; they see the action of the cloak of invisibility, etc. Von Hetendorf joins forces with *Lugur*, who is now jealous of Larry.

The *come-lucky* ones, those from Earth, then issued forth a sound majestic, summing cosmic; then falling and long-winded. Colored rays dart across the waters. The *Shining One* races forward, its seven globes of seven colors shining above its glowing core. It dances, reaching out its spirals to unfold the light-haired ones—dwarfs, from whom it seemed to gather new strength and power.

Olaf, who has been with his family ever since an accident or design, is thrown forward, and falls into the *Dragon*. He falls up and rushes madly for the *Shining One*, but Larry, quick as a flash, jumps between them and pushes Olaf back. The tentacles touch Larry, but thanks to Yolara, his garment is proof against it. *Lugur* jumps forward with *Rador* aimed at the *Norman*, but Larry quickly seizes his robe over Olaf and thrusts his automatic into *Lugur's* stomach. *Lugur* retreats.

During a ceremony, into which Larry is swept, almost a willing victim, and which Goodwin and Olaf view with horror and evil foreboding, Laska, the handmaiden of the *Silent Ones*, appears with her frog-like guard. Larry is freed from Yolara. He wants to go with them, but Yolara says, "No! You must stay here and be used up."

Von Hetendorf and *Lugur* persuade the angry Yolara to kill him and his friends, but with the aid of *Rador* who has reason to be grateful to them, they manage to escape in a corial and race forth to Laska's land. Soon pursuit follows.

They are led by *Rador*, the Uncle of *Laska*, through many secret passages and dangerous grounds. Now *Rador* warns them not to look into the eyes of "the power of cold fire."

## THE MOON POOL

By A. MERRITT

### Part III

#### CHAPTER XXIII (Continued)

##### Dragon Worm and Moss Death

T appeared to be a tunnel cut through soft green mould. Its base was a flat strip of pathway a yard wide from which the walls curved out in perfect cylindrical form. Thirty feet wide at their widest they drew toward each other with no break in their symmetry; they did not close. Above was, roughly, a ten-foot rift, ragged edged, through which poured light like that in the heart of pale amber a buttercup light shot through with curiously evanescent bronze shadows.

"Quick!" commanded *Rador*, uneasily, and set off at a sharp pace.

Now, my eyes accustomed to the strange light, I saw that the tunnel's walls were of moss. In them I could trace fringe leaf and curly leaf, pressings of enormous bladder caps (*Physcomitrium*), immense splashes of what seemed to be the scarlet-crested Cladonia, traceries of huge moss veils, crushings of teeth (peristome)

gigantic; spore cases brown and white, saffron and ivy, hot vermilions and cerulean blues, pressed into an astounding mosaic by some titanic force.

"Hurry!" It was *Rador* calling. I had lagged behind.

He quickened the pace to a half-run; we were climbing, panting. The amber light grew stronger; the rift above us wider. The tunnel curved; on the left a narrow cleft appeared. The green dwarf leaped toward it, thrust us within, pushed us ahead of him up a steep rocky fissure—well-nigh, indeed, a chimney. Up and up this we scrambled until my lungs were bursting and I thought I could climb no more. The crevice ended, we crawled out and sank, even *Rador*, upon a little leaf-carpeted clearing circled by lacy tree ferns.

Gaspings, legs aching, we lay prone, relaxed, drawing back strength and breath. *Rador* was first to rise. Thrice he bent low as in homage then—

"Give thanks to the *Silent Ones*—for their power has been over us!" he exclaimed.

## AMAZING STORIES

Dimly I wondered what he meant. Something about the fern leaf at which I had been staring aroused me. I leaped to my feet and ran to its base. This was no fern, no! It was fern moss! The largest of its species I had ever found in tropic jungles had not been more than two inches high, and this was—twenty feet! The scientific fire I had experienced in the tunnel returned uncontrollably. I parted the fronds, gazed out—

My outlook commanded a vista of miles—and that vista! A *Fata Morgana* of plantdom! A land of flowered sorcery!

Forests of tree-high mosses spangled over with blooms of every conceivable shape and color; cataracts and clusters, avalanches and nets of blossoms in pastels, in dulled metallics, in gorgeous flamboyant hues; some of them phosphorescent and shining like living jewels; some sparkling as though with dust of opals, of sapphires, of rubies and topazes and emeralds; thickets of convolvuli like the trumpets of the seven archangels of Mara, king of illusion, which are shaped from the bows of splendors arching his highest heaven!

And moss veils like banners of a marching host of Titans; pennons and banners of the sunset; gonfalons of the Jinn; webs of faery; oriflammes of elfland!

Springing up through that polychromatic flood myriads of pedicles—slender and straight as spears, or soaring in spirals, or curving with undulations gracile as the white serpents of Tanit in ancient Carthaginian groves—and all surmounted by a fantasy of spore cases in shapes of minaret and turret, domes and spires and cones, caps of Phrygia and bishops' mitres, shapes grotesque and unnameable—shapes delicate and lovely!

They hung high poised, nodding and swaying—like goblins hovering over *Titania's* court! cacophony of Cathay accenting the *Flower Maiden* music of "Parsifal"; *bizarrie* of the angled, fantastic beings that people of the Javan pantheon watching a bacchanal of houris in Mohammed's paradise!

Down upon it all poured the amber light; dimmed in the distances by huge, drifting darkenings lurid as the flying mantles of the hurricane.

And through the light, like showers of jewels, myriads of birds, darting, dipping, soaring, and still other myriads of gigantic, shimmering butterflies.

A sound came to us, reaching out like the first faint susurruus of the incoming tide; sighing, sighing, growing stronger—now its mournful whispering quivered all about us, shook us—then passing like a Presence, died away in far distances.

"The Portal!" said Rador. "Lugur has entered!"

He, too, parted the fronds and peered back along our path. Peering with him we saw the barrier through which we had come stretching verdure-covered walls for miles three or more away. Like a mole burrow in a garden stretched the trail of the tunnel; here and there we could look down within the rift at its top; far off in it I thought I saw the glint of spears.

"They come!" whispered Rador. "Quick! We must not meet them here!"

And then—

"Holy St. Brigid!" gasped Larry.

FROM the rift in the tunnel's continuation, nigh a mile beyond the cleft through which we had fled, lifted a crown of horns—of tentacles—erect, alert, of mottled gold and crimson; lifted higher—and from a monstrous scarlet head beneath them blazed two enormous, obloid eyes, their depths wells of purplish phosphorescence; higher still—noseless, earless, chinless; a livid, worm mouth from which a slender scarlet tongue leaped like playing flames! Slowly it rose—its mighty neck cuirassed with gold and scarlet scales from whose polished surfaces the amber light glinted like flakes of fire; and under this neath shimmered something like a pale luminous silvery shield, guarding it. The head of horror mounted—and in the shield's centre, full ten feet across, glowing, flickering, shining out—coldly, was a rose of white flame, a "flower of cold fire" even as Rador had said.

Now swiftly the Thing upreared, standing like a scaled tower a hundred feet above the rift, its eyes scanning that movement I had seen along the course of its lair. There was a hissing; the crown of horns fell, whipped and writhed like the tentacles of an octopus; the towering length dropped back.

"Quick!" gasped Rador and through the fern moss, along the path and down the other side of the steep we raced.

Behind us for an instant there was a rushing as of a torrent; a far-away, faint, agonized screaming—silence!

"No fear now from those who followed," whispered the green dwarf, pausing.

"Sainted St. Patrick!" O'Keefe gazed ruminatively at his automatic. "An' he expected me to kill *that* with *this*! Well, as Fergus O'Connor said when they sent him out to slaughter a wild bull with a potato knife: 'Ye'll never raylize how I appreciate the confidence ye show in me!'

"What was it Doc?" he asked.

"The dragon worm!" Rador said.

"It was Helvede Orm—the hell worm!" groaned Olaf.

"There you go again—" blazed Larry; but the green dwarf was hurrying down the path and swiftly we followed, Larry muttering, Olaf mumbling, behind me.

The green dwarf was signalling us for caution. He pointed through a break in a grove of fifty-foot cedar mosses—we were skirting the glassy road! Scanning it we found no trace of Lugur and wondered whether he too had seen the worm and had fled. Quickly we passed on; drew away from the *coria* path. The mosses began to thin; less and less they grew, giving way to low clumps that barely offered us shelter. Unexpectedly another screen of fern moss stretched before us. Slowly Rador made his way through it and stood hesitating.

The scene in front of us was oddly weird and depressing; in some indefinable way—dreadful. Why, I could not tell, but the impression was plain; I shrank from it. Then, self-analyzing, I wondered whether it could be the uncanny resemblance the heaps of curious mossy fungi scattered about had to beast and bird—yes, and to man—that was the cause of it. Our path ran between a few of them. To the left they were thick. They were viridescent,

almost metallic hued—verd-antique. Curiously indeed were they like distorted images of dog and deerlike forms, of birds—of dwarfs and here and there the simulacra of the giant frogs! Spore cases, yellowish green, as large as mitres and much resembling them in shape protruded from the heaps. My repulsion grew into a distinct nausea.

Rador turned to us a face whiter than that with which he had looked upon the dragon worm. "Now for your lives," he whispered, "tread softly here as I do—and speak not at all!"

**H**E stepped forward on tiptoe, slowly with utmost caution. We crept after him; passed the heaps beside the path—and as I passed my skin crept and I shrank and saw the others shrink too with the unnameable loathing; nor did the green dwarf pause until he had reached the brow of a small hillock a hundred yards beyond. And he was trembling.

"Now what are we up against?" grumbled O'Keefe.

The green dwarf stretched a hand; stiffened; gazed over to the left of us beyond a lower hillock upon whose broad crest lay a file of the moss shapes. They fringed it, their mitres having a grotesque appearance of watching what lay below. The glistening road lay there—and from it came a shout. A dozen of the *coria* clustered, filled with Lugur's men and in one of them Lugur himself, laughing wickedly!

There was a rush of soldiers and up the low hillock raced a score of them toward us.

"Run!" shouted Rador.

"Not much!" grunted Larry—and took swift aim at Lugur. The automatic spat; Olaf's echoed. Both bullets went wide, for Lugur, still laughing threw himself into the protection of the body of his shell. But following the shots, from the filth of moss heaps on the crest, came a series of muffled explosions. Under the pistols' concussions the mitred caps had burst and instantly all about the running soldiers grew a cloud of tiny, glistening white spores—like a little cloud of puff-ball dust many times magnified. Through this cloud I glimpsed their faces, stricken with agony.

Some turned to fly, but before they could take a second step stood rigid.

The spore cloud drifted and eddied about them; rained down on their heads and half bare breasts, covered their garments—and swiftly they began to change! Their features grew indistinct—merged! The glistening white spores that covered them turned to a pale yellow, grew greenish, spread and swelled, darkened. The eyes of one of the soldiers glinted for a moment—and then were covered by the swift growth!

Where but a few moments before had been men were only grotesque heaps, swiftly melting, swiftly rounding into the semblance of the mounds that lay behind us—and already beginning to take on their gleam of ancient viridescence!

The Irishman was gripping my arm fiercely; the pain brought me back to my senses.

"Olaf's right," he gasped. "This is hell! I'm sick." And he was, frankly and without restraint. Lugur and his others awakened from their nightmare, piled into the *coria*, wheeled, raced away.

"On!" said Rador thickly. "Two perils have we passed—the Silent Ones watch over us!"

Soon we were again among the familiar and so unfamiliar moss giants. I knew what I had seen and this time Larry could not call me—superstitious. In the jungles of Borneo I had examined that other swiftly developing fungus which wreaks the vengeance of some of the hill tribes upon those who steal their women; gripping with its microscopic hooks into the flesh; sending quick, tiny rootlets through the skin down into the capillaries, sucking life and thriving and never to be torn away until the living thing it clings to has been sapped dry. Here was but another of the species in which the development's rate was incredibly accelerated. Some of this I tried to explain to O'Keefe as we sped along, reassuring him.

"But they turned to moss before our eyes!" he said.

Again I explained, patiently. But he seemed to derive no comfort at all from my assurances that the phenomena were entirely natural and, aside from their more terrifying aspect, of peculiar interest to the botanist.

"I know," was all he would say. "But suppose one of those things had burst while we were going through—God!"

I was wondering how I could with comparative safety study the fungus when Rador stopped; in front of us was again the road ribbon.

"Now is all danger passed," he said. "The way lies open and Lugur has fled—"

There was a flash from the road. It passed me like a little lariat of light. It struck Larry squarely between the eyes, spread over his face and drew itself within!

"Down!" cried Rador, and hurled me to the ground. My head struck sharply; I felt myself grow faint; Olaf fell beside me; I saw the green dwarf draw down the O'Keefe; he collapsed limply, face still, eyes staring. A shout—and from the roadway poured a host of Lugur's men; I could hear Lugur bellowing.

There came a rush of little feet; soft, fragrant draperies brushed my face; dimly I watched Lakla bend over the Irishman.

She straightened—her arms swept out and the writhing vine, with its tendriled heads of ruby bloom, four flames of misty incandescence, leaped into the faces of the soldiers now close upon us. It darted at their throats, striking, coiling, and striking again; coiling and uncoiling with incredible rapidity and flying from leverage points of throats, of faces, of breasts like a spring endowed with consciousness, volition and hatred—and those it struck stood rigid as stone with faces masks of inhuman fear and anguish; and those still unstricken fled.

Another rush of feet—and down upon Lugur's forces poured the frog-men, their boomerang giant leading, thrusting with their lances, tearing and rending with talons and fangs and spurs.

Against that onslaught the dwarfs could not stand. They raced for the shells; I heard Lugur shouting, menacingly—and then Lakla's voice, pealing like a golden bugle of wrath.

"Go, Lugur!" she cried. "Go—that you and Yolara and your Shining One may die together!"

Death for you, Lugur—death for you all! Remember Lugur—death!"

There was a great noise within my head—not matter, Lakla was here—Lakla here—but too late—Lugur had outplayed us; moss death nor dragon worm had frightened him away—he had crept back to trap us—Lakla had come too late—Larry was dead—Larry! But I had heard no banshee wailing—and Larry had said he could not die without that warning—no, Larry was not dead. So ran the turbulent current of my mind.

A horny arm lifted me; two enormous, oddly gentle saucer eyes were staring into mine; my head rolled; I caught a glimpse of the Golden Girl kneeling beside O'Keefe.

The noise in my head grew thunderous—was carrying me away on its thunder—swept me into soft, blind darkness.

#### CHAPTER XXIV

##### The Crimson Sea

**I** WAS in the heart of a rose petal, swinging, swinging; no, I was in a rosy dawn cloud, pendulous in space. Consciousness flooded me; in reality I was in the arms of one of the man frogs, carrying me as though I were a babe, and we were passing through some place suffused with glow enough like heart of pearl or dawn cloud to justify my awakening vagaries.

Just ahead walked Lakla in earnest talk with Rador, and content enough was I for a time to watch her. She had thrown off the metallic robes; her thick braids of golden brown with their flame glints of bronze were twined in a high coronal meshed in silken net of green; little clustering curls escaped from it, clinging to the nape of the proud white neck, shyly kissing it. From her shoulders fell a loose, sleeveless garment of shimmering green belted with a high golden girdle; skirt folds dropping barely below the knees.

She had cast aside her buskins, too, and the slender, high-arched feet were sandalled. Between the buckled edges of her kirtle I caught gleams of translucent ivory as exquisitely moulded, as delectably rounded, as those revealed so naively beneath the hem.

Something was knocking at the doors of my consciousness—some tragic thing. What was it? Larry! Where was Larry? I remembered; raised my head abruptly; saw at my side another frog-man carrying O'Keefe, and behind him, Olaf, step instinct with grief, following like some faithful, wistful dog who has lost a loved master. Upon my movement the monster bearing me halted, looked down inquiringly, uttered a deep, booming note that held the quality of interrogation.

Lakla turned; the clear, golden eyes were sorrowful, the sweet mouth drooping; but her loveliness, her gentleness, that undefinable synthesis of all her tender self that seemed always to circle her with an atmosphere of lucid normality, lulled my panic.

"Drink this," she commanded, holding a small vial to my lips.

Its contents were aromatic, unfamiliar but astonishingly effective, for as soon as they passed my

lips I felt a surge of strength; consciousness was restored.

"Larry!" I cried. "Is he dead?"

Lakla shook her head, her eyes troubled.

"No," she said; "but he is like one dead—and yet unlike—"

"Put me down," I demanded to my bearer.

He tightened his hold; round eyes upon the Golden Girl. She spoke—in sonorous, reverberating monosyllables—and I was set upon my feet; I leaped to the side of the Irishman. He lay limp, with a disquieting, abnormal limpness as though every muscle were utterly flaccid; the antithesis of the *rigor mortis*, thank God, but terrifyingly toward the other end of its arc; a syncope I had never known. The flesh was stone cold; the pulse barely perceptible, long intervalled; the respiration undiscernable; the pupils of the eyes were enormously dilated; it was as though life had been drawn from every nerve.

"A light flashed from the road. It struck his face and seemed to sink in," I said.

"I saw," answered Rador; "but what it was I know not; and I thought I knew all the weapons of our rulers." He glanced at me curiously. "Some talk there has been that the stranger who came with you, Double Tongue, was making new death tools for Lugur," he ended.

Von Hetzendorf! The German at work already in this storehouse of devastating energies, fashioning the weapons for his plots! The Apocalyptic vision swept back upon me—

"He is not dead." Lakla's voice was poignant. "He is not dead; and the Three have wondrous healing. They can restore him if they will—and they will, they *will!*" For a moment she was silent. "Now their gods help Lugur and Yolara," she whispered; "for come what may, whether the Silent Ones be strong or weak, if he dies, surely shall I fall upon them and I will slay those two—yea, though I, too, perish!"

"Yolara and Lugur shall both die." Olaf's eyes were burning. "But Lugur is mine to slay."

That pity I had seen before in Lakla's eyes when she looked upon the Norseman banished the white wrath from them. She turned, half hurriedly, as though to escape his gaze.

"Walk with us," she said to me, "unless you are still weak."

I shook my head, gave a last look at O'Keefe; there was nothing I could do; I stepped beside her. She thrust a white arm into mine protectingly, the wonderfully moulded hand with its long, tapering fingers catching about my wrist; my heart glowed toward her.

"Your medicine is potent, handmaiden," I answered. "And the touch of your hand would give me strength enough, even had I not drunk it," I added in Larry's best manner.

Her eyes danced, trouble flying.

"Now, that was well spoken for such a man of wisdom as Rador tells me you are," she laughed; and a little pang shot through me. Could not a lover of science present a compliment without it always seeming to be as unusual as plucking a damask rose from a cabinet of fossils?

Mustering my philosophy, I smiled back at her. Again I noted that broad, classic brow, with the little tendrils of shining bronze caressing it, the tilted, delicate, nut-brown brows that gave a curious touch of innocent *diablerie* to the lovely face—flowerlike, pure, high-bred, a touch of roguishness, subtly alluring, sparkling over the maiden Madonna-ness that lay ever like a delicate luminous suggestion beneath it.

"I have always liked you," she murmured naively, "since first I saw you in that place where the Shining One goes forth into your world. And I am glad you like my medicine as well as that you carry in the black box that you left behind," she added swiftly.

"How know you of that, Lakla?" I gasped.

"Oft and oft I came to him there, and to you, while you lay sleeping. How call you him?" She paused.

"Larry!" I said.

"Larry!" she repeated it excellently. "And you?"

"Goodwin," said Rador.

I bowed quite as though I were being introduced to some charming young lady met in that old life now seemingly a gone removed.

"Yes—Goodwin," she said. "Oft and oft I came. Sometimes I thought you saw me. And he—did he not dream of me sometimes?" she asked wistfully.

"He did," I said, "and watched for you." Then amazement grew vocal. "But how came you?" I asked.

"By a strange road," she whispered, "to see that all was well with him—and to look into his heart; for I feared Yolara and her beauty. But I saw that she was not in his heart." A blush burned all over her. "It is a strange road," she went on hurriedly. "Many times have I followed it and watched the Shining One bear back its prey to the blue pool; seen the woman he seeks"—she made a quick gesture toward Olaf—"and a babe cast from her arms in the last pang of her mother love; seen another woman throw herself into the Shining One's embrace to save a man she loved; and I could not help!" Her voice grew deep, thrilled. "The friend, it comes to me, who drew you here, Goodwin!"

SHE was silent, walking as one who sees visions and listens to voices unheard by others. Rador made a warning gesture; I crowded back my questions, glanced about me. We were passing over a smooth strand, hard packed as some beach of long-thrust-back ocean. It was like crushed garnets, each grain stained deep red, faintly sparkling. On each side were distances, the floor stretching away into them bare of vegetation—stretching on and on into infinitudes of rosy mist, even as did the space above.

Flanking and behind us marched the giant batrachians, fivescore of them at least, black scale and crimson scale lustrous and gleaming in the rosaceous radiance; saucer eyes shining circles of phosphorescence green, purple, red; spurs clicking as they crouched along with a gait at once grotesque and formidable.

Ahead the mist deepened into a ruddier glow; through it a long, dark line began to appear—the

mouth, I thought, of the caverned space through which we were going; it was just before us; over us—we stood bathed in a flood of rubescence!

A sea stretched before us—a crimson sea, gleaming like that lost lacquer of royal coral and the Flame Dragon's blood which Fu S'cze set upon the bower he built for his stolen sun maiden—that going toward it she might think it the sun itself rising over the summer seas. Unmoved by wave or ripple it was placid as some deep woodland pool when night rushes up over the world. It seemed molten—or as though some hand great enough to rock earth had distilled here from conflagrations of autumn sunsets their flaming essences.

A fish burst through, large as a shark, blunt-headed, flashing bronze, ridged and mailed as though with serrate plates of armour. It leaped high, shaking from it a sparkling spray of rubies; dropped and shot up a geyser of fiery gems.

Across my line of vision, moving stately over the sea, floated a half globe, luminous, diaphanous, its iridescent melting into turquoise, thence to amethyst, to orange, to scarlet shot with rose, to vermillion, translucent green, thence back into the iridescent; behind it four others, and the least of them ten feet in diameter, and the largest no less than thirty. They drifted past like bubbles blown from froth of rainbows by pipes in mouths of Titans' young. Then from the base of one arose a tangle of shimmering strands, long, slender whip lashes that played about and sank slowly again beneath the crimson surface.

I gasped—for the fish had been a *ganoid*—that ancient, armoured form that was perhaps the most intelligent of all life on our planet during the Devonian era, but which for age upon age had vanished, save for its fossils held in the embrace of the stone that once was their soft bottom beds; and the half-globes were *Medusae*, jelly-fish—but of a size, luminosity, and color unheard of.

Now Lakla cupped her mouth with pink palms and sent a clarion note ringing out. The ledge on which we stood continued a few hundred feet before us, falling abruptly, though from no great height, to the Crimson Sea; at right and left it extended in a long semicircle. Turning to the right whence she had sent her call, I saw rising a mile or more away, veiled lightly by the haze, a rainbow, a gigantic prismatic arch, flattened, I thought, by some quality of the strange atmosphere. It sprang from the ruddy strand, leaped the crimson tide, and dropped three miles away upon a precipitous, jagged upthrust of rock frowning black from the lacquered depths.

And surmounting a higher ledge beyond this upthrust a huge dome of dull gold, Cyclopean, striking eyes and mind with something unhumanly alien, baffling; sending the mind groping, as though across the deserts of space, from some far-flung star, should fall upon us linked sounds, coherent certainly, meaningful surely, vaguely familiar—yet never to be translated into any symbol or thought of our own particular planet.

The sea of crimson lacquer, with its floating moons of luminous color—this bow of prisms stone leaping to the weird isle crowned by the anomalous,

aureate—excrescence—the half human batrachians—the elfland through which we had passed, with all its hidden wonders and terrors—I felt the foundations of my cherished knowledge shaking. Was this all a dream? Was this body of mine lying somewhere, fighting a fevered death, and all these but images floating through the breaking chambers of my brain? My knees shook, involuntarily I groaned.

Lakla turned, looked at me anxiously, slipped a soft arm behind me, held me till the vertigo passed.

"Patience," she said. "The bearers come. Soon you shall rest."

I looked; down toward us from the bow's end were leaping swiftly another score of the frog-men. Some bore litters, high, handled, not unlike palanquins—

"Asgard!" Olaf stood beside me, eyes burning, pointing to the arch. "Bifrost Bridge, sharp as sword edge, over which souls go to Valhalla. And she—she is a Valkyra—a sword maiden, Je!"

I gripped the Norseman's hand. It was hot, and a pang of remorse shot through me. If this place had so shaken me, how must it have shaken Olaf? It was with relief that I watched him, at Lakla's gentle command, drop into one of the litters and lie back, eyes closed, as two of the monsters raised its yoke to their scaled shoulders. Nor was it without further relief that I myself lay back on the soft velvety cushions of another.

The cavalcade began to move. Lakla had ordered O'Keefe placed beside her, and she sat, knees crossed Orient fashion, leaning over the pale head on her lap, the white, tapering fingers straying fondly through his hair.

Presently I saw her reach up, slowly unwind the coronal of her tresses, shake them loose, and let them fall like a veil over her and him.

Her head bent low; I heard a soft sobbing—I turned away my gaze, torn enough in my own heart, God knew!

## CHAPTER XXV

### The Three Silent Ones

THE arch was closer—and in my awe I forgot for the moment Larry and aught else. For this was no rainbow, no thing born of light and mist, no Bifrost Bridge of myth—no! It was a flying arch of stone, stained with flares of Tyrian purples, of royal scarlets, of blues dark as the Gulf Stream's ribbon, sapphires soft as midday May skies, splashes of chromes and greens—a palette of giantry, a bridge of wizardry; a hundred, nay, a thousand, times greater than that of Utah which the Navaho call Nonnegozche and worship, as well they may, as a god, and which is itself a rainbow in eternal rock.

It sprang from the ledge and winged its prodigious length in one low arc over the sea's crimson breast, as though in some ancient paroxysm of earth it had been hurled molten, crystallizing into that stupendous span and still flaming with the fires that had moulded it.

Closer we came and closer, while I watched spell-bound; now we were at its head, and the litter-bearers swept upon it. All of five hundred feet wide

it was, surface smooth as a city road, sides low walled, curving inward as though in the jetting-out of its making the edges of the plastic rock had curled.

On and on we sped; the high thrusting precipices upon which the bridge's far end rested, frowned close, the enigmatic, dully shining dome loomed ever greater. Now we had reached that end; were passing over a smooth plaza whose level floor was enclosed, save for a rift in front of us, by the fanged tops of the black cliffs.

From this rift stretched another span, half a mile long, perhaps, widening at its centre into a broad platform, continuing straight to two massive gates set within the face of the second cliff wall like panels, and of the same dull gold as the dome rising high beyond. And this smaller arch leaped a pit, an abyss, of which the outer precipices were the rim holding back from the pit the red flood.

We were rapidly approaching now upon the platform; my bearers were striding closely along the side; I leaned far out—a giddiness seized me! I gazed down into depth upon vertiginous depth; an abyss indeed—an abyss dropping to world's base like that in which the Babylonians believed writhed Talaat, the serpent mother of Chaos; a pit that struck down into earth's heart itself.

Now, what was that—distance upon unfathomable distance below? A stupendous glowing like the green fire of life itself. What was it like? I had it! It was like the corona of the sun in eclipse—that burgeoning that makes of our luminary when moon veils it an incredible blossoming of splendors in the darkened heavens.

And strangely, strangely, it was like the Dweller's beauty when its dazzling spirallings and writhings it raced amid its storm of crystal bell sounds!

The abyss was behind us; we had paused at the golden portals; they swung inward. A wide corridor filled with soft light was before us, and on its threshold stood—bizarre, yellow gems gleaming, huge muzzle wide in what was evidently meant for a smile of welcome—the woman frog of the Moon Pool wall.

Lakla raised her head; swept back the silken tent of her hair and gazed at me with eyes misty from weeping. The frog-woman crept to her side; gazed down upon Larry; spoke—spoke—to the Golden Girl in a swift stream of the sonorous, reverberant monosyllables; and Lakla answered her in kind. The webbed digits swept over O'Keefe's face, felt at his heart; she shook her head and moved ahead of us up the passage.

Still borne in the litters we went on, winding, ascending until at last they were set down in a great hall carpeted with soft fragrant rushes and into which from high narrow slits streamed the crimson light from without.

I jumped over to Larry; there had been no change in his condition; still the terrifying limpness, the slow, infrequent pulsation. Rador and Olaf—and the fever now seemed to be gone from him—came and stood beside me, silent.

"I go to the Three," said Lakla. "Wait you here." She passed through the curtaining; then as swiftly as she had gone she returned through the hangings,

tresses braided, a swathing of golden gauze about her.

"Rador," she said, "bear you Larry—for into your heart the Silent Ones would look. And fear nothing," she added at the green dwarf's disconcerted, almost fearful start.

Rador bowed, was thrust aside by Olaf.

"No," said the Norseman; "I will carry him."

He lifted Larry like a child against his broad breast. The dwarf glanced quickly at Lakla; she nodded.

"Come!" she commanded, and held aside the folds.

Of that journey I have few memories. I only know that we went through corridor upon corridor; successions of vast halls and chambers, some carpeted with the rushes, others with rugs into which the feet sank as into deep, soft meadows; spaces illuminated by the rubrous light, and spaces in which softer lights held sway.

We paused before a slab of the same crimson stone as that the green dwarf had called the Portal, and upon its polished surface weaved the same unnameable symbols. The Golden Girl pressed upon its side; it slipped softly back; a torrent of opalescence gushed out of the opening—and as one in a dream I entered.

We were, I knew, just under the dome; but, for the moment, caught in the flood of radiance, I could see nothing. It was like being held within a fire opal—so brilliant, so flashing, was it. I closed my eyes, opened them; the lambency cascaded from the vast curves of the globular walls; in front of me was a long, narrow opening in them, through which, far away, I could see the end of the wizards' bridge and the ledged mouth of the cavern through which we had come; against the light from within beat the crimson light from without—and was checked as though by a barrier.

I felt Lakla's touch; turned.

A HUNDRED paces away was a dais, its rim raised a yard above the floor. From the edge of this rim streamed upward a steady, coruscating mist of the opalescence, veined even as was that of the Dweller's shining core and shot with milky shadows like curdled moonlight; up it stretched like a wall.

Over it, from it, down upon me, gazed three faces—two clearly male, one a woman's. At the first I thought them statues, and then the eyes of them gave the lie to me; for the eyes were alive, terribly, and if I could admit the word—*supernaturally*—alive.

They were thrice the size of the human eye and triangular, the apex of the angle upward; black as jet, pupilless, filled with tiny, leaping red flames.

Over them were foreheads, not as ours—high and broad and visored; their sides drawn forward into a vertical ridge, a prominence, an upright wedge, somewhat like the visored heads of a few of the great lizards—and the heads, long, narrowing at the back, were fully twice the size of mankind's!

Upon the brows were caps—and with a fearful certainty I knew that they were *not* caps—long, thick strands of gleaming, yellow, feathered scales thin as sequins! Sharp, curving noses like the

beaks of the giant condors; mouths thin, austere; long, powerful, pointed chins; the—flesh—of the faces white as whitest marble; and wreathing up to them, covering all their bodies, the shimmering, curdled, misty fires of opalescence!

Olaf stood rigid; my own heart leaped wildly. What—what were these beings?

I forced myself to look again—and from their gaze streamed a current of reassurance, of good will—nay, of intense spiritual strength. I saw that they were not fierce, not ruthless, not inhuman, despite their strangeness; no, they were kindly; in some unmistakable way, benign and sorrowful—so sorrowful! I straightened, gazed back at them fearlessly. Olaf drew a deep breath, gazed steadily too, the hardness, the despair wiped from his face.

Now Lakla drew closer to the dais; the three pairs of eyes searched hers, the woman's with an ineffable tenderness; some message seemed to pass between the Three and the Golden Girl. She bowed low, turned to the Norseman.

"Place Larry there," she said softly—"there at the feet of the Silent Ones."

She pointed into the radiant mist; Olaf started, hesitated, stared from Lakla to the Three, searched for a moment their eyes—and something like a smile drifted through them. He stepped forward, lifted O'Keefe, set him squarely within the covering light. It wavered, rolled upward, swirled about the body, steadied again—and within it there was no sign of Larry!

Again the mist wavered, shook, and seemed to climb higher, hiding the chins, the beaked noses, the brows of that incredible Trinity—but before it ceased to climb, I thought the yellow, feathered heads bent; sensed a movement as though they lifted something.

The mist fell; the eyes gleamed out again, inscrutably.

And groping out of the radiance, pausing at the verge of the dais, leaping down from it, came Larry, laughing, filled with life, blinking as one who draws from darkness into sunshine. He saw Lakla, sprang to her, gripped her in his arms.

"Lakla!" he cried. "*Mavourneen!*" She slipped from his embrace, blushing, glancing at the Three shyly, half-fearfully. And again I saw the tenderness creep into the inky, flame-shot orbs of the woman being; and a tenderness in the others too—as though they regarded some well-beloved child.

"You lay in the arms of Death, Larry," she said. "And the Silent Ones drew you from him. Do homage to the Silent Ones, Larry, for they are good and they are mighty!"

She turned his head with one of the long, white hands—and he looked into the faces of the Three; looked long, was shaken even as had been Olaf and myself; was swept by that same wave of power and of—what can I call it?—holiness that streamed from them.

Then for the first time I saw real awe mount into his face. Another moment he stared—and dropped upon one knee and bowed his head before them as would a worshipper before the shrine of his saint. And—I am not ashamed to tell it—I joined him; and with us knelt Lakla and Olaf and Rador.

The mist of fiery opal swirled up about the Three; hid them.

And with a long, deep, joyous sigh Lakla took Larry's hand, drew him to his feet, and silently we followed them out of that hall of wonder.

But why, in going, did the thought come to me that from where the Three sat throned they ever watched the cavern mouth that was the door into their abode; and looked down ever into the unfathomable depth in which glowed and pulsed that mystic flower, colossal, awesome, of green flame that had seemed to me fire of life itself?

## CHAPTER XXVI

### The Wooing of Lakla

I HAD slept soundly and dreamlessly; I wakened quietly in the great chamber into which Rador had ushered O'Keefe and myself after that culminating experience of crowded, nerve-racking hours—the facing of the Three.

Now, lying gazing upward at the high-vaulted ceiling, I heard Larry's voice:

"They look like birds." Evidently he was thinking of the Three; a silence—then: "Yes, they look like birds—and they look, and it's meaning no disrespect to them I am at all, they look like lizards"—another silence—"and they look like some sort of gods, and, by the good sword-arm of Brian Boru, they look human, too! And it's none of them they are either, so what—what the—what the sainted St. Bridget are they?" Another short silence, and then in a tone of awed and absolute conviction: "That's it, sure! That's what they are—it all hangs in—they couldn't be anything else—"

He gave a whoop; a pillow shot over and caught me across the head.

"Wake up!" shouted Larry. "Wake up, ye seething cauldron of fossilized superstitions! Wake up, ye bogey-haunted man of scientific unwisdom!"

Under pillow and insults I bounced to my feet, filled for a moment with quite real wrath; he lay back, roaring with laughter, and my anger was swept away.

"Doc," he said, very seriously, after this, "I know who the Three are!"

"Yes?" I queried, with studied sarcasm.

"Yes?" he mimicked. "Yes! Ye—ye—" He paused under the menace of my look, grinned. "Yes, I know," he continued. "They're of the Tuatha Dé, the old ones, the great people of Ireland, *that's* who they are!"

I knew, of course, of the Tuatha Dé Danann, the tribe of the god Danu, the half-legendary, half-historical clan who found their home in Erin some four thousand years before the Christian era, and who have left so deep an impress upon the Celtic mind and its myths.

"Yes," said Larry again, "the Tuatha Dé—the Ancient Ones who had spells that could compel Mananan, who is the spirit of all the seas, an' Kei thor, who is the god of all green living things, an' even Hesus, the unseen god, whose pulse is the pulse of all the firmament; yes, an' Orchil too, who sits within the earth an' weaves with the shuttle of mystery and her three looms of birth an' life an'

death—even Orchil would weave as they commanded!"

He was silent—then:

"They are of them—the mighty ones—why else would I have bent my knee to them as I would have to the spirit of my dead mother? Why else would Lakla, whose gold-brown hair is the hair of Eilidh the Fair, whose mouth is the sweet mouth of Deirdre, an' whose soul walked with mine ages agoe among the fragrant green myrtle of Erin, serve them?" he whispered, eyes full of dream.

"Have you any idea how they got here?" I asked, not unreasonably.

"I haven't thought about that," he replied somewhat testily. "But at once, me excellent man o' wisdom, a number occur to me. One of them is that this little party of three might have stopped here on their way to Ireland, an' for good reasons of their own decided to stay a while; an' another is that they might have come here afterward, havin' got wind of what those rats out there were contemplatin', and have stayed on the job till the time was ripe to save Ireland from 'em; the rest of the world, too, of course," he added magnanimously, "but Ireland in particular. And do any of those reasons appeal to ye?"

I shook my head.

"Well, what do *you* think?" he asked wearily.

"I think," I said cautiously, "that we face an evolution of highly intelligent beings from ancestral sources radically removed from those through which mankind ascended. These half-human, highly developed batrachians they call the Akka prove that evolution in these caverned spaces has certainly pursued one different path than on earth. The Englishman, Wells, wrote an imaginative and very entertaining book concerning an invasion of earth by Martians, and he made his Martians enormously specialized cuttlefish. There was nothing inherently improbable in Wells's choice. Man is the ruling animal of earth today solely by reason of a series of accidents; under another series spiders or ants, or even elephants, could have become the dominant race."

"I think," I said, even more cautiously, "that the race to which the Three belong never appeared on earth's surface; that their development took place here, unhindered through aeons. And if this be true, the structure of their brains, and therefore all their reactions, must be different from ours. Hence their knowledge and command of energies unfamiliar to us—and hence also the question whether they may not have an entirely different sense of values, of justice—and that is rather terrifying," I concluded.

Larry shook his head.

"That last sort of knocks your argument, Doc," he said. "They had sense of justice enough to help me out—and certainly they know love—for I saw the way they looked at Lakla; and sorrow—for there was no mistaking that in their faces."

"No," he went on. "I hold to my own idea. They're of the Old People. The little leprechaun knew his way here, an' I'll bet it was they who sent the word. An' if the O'Keefe banshee comes here—which save the mark!—I'll bet she'll drop

in on the Silent Ones for a social visit before she an' her clan get busy. Well, it'll make her feel more at home, the good old body. No, Doc, no," he concluded, "I'm right; it all fits in too well to be wrong."

I made a last despairing attempt.

"Is there anything anywhere in Ireland that would indicate that the Tuatha Dé ever looked like the Three?" I asked—and again I had spoken most unfortunately.

"Is there?" he shouted. "Is there? By the kilt of Cormack MacCormack, I'm glad ye reminded me. It was worryin' me a little meself. There was Dagha, who could put on the head of a great boar an' the body of a giant fish and cleave the waves an' tear to pieces the birlins of any who came against Erin; an' there was Rinn—"

**H**OW many more of the metamorphoses of the old people I might have heard, I do not know, for the curtains parted and I walked Rador.

"You have rested well," he smiled, "I can see. The handmaiden bade me call you. You are to eat with her in her garden."

Down long corridors we trod and out upon a gardened terrace we trod and out upon a gardened terrace as beautiful as any of those of Yolar's city; bowered, blossoming, fragrant, set high upon the cliffs beside the domed castle. A table, as of milky jade, was spread at one corner, but the Golden Girl was not there. A little path ran on and up, hemmed in by the mass of verdure. I looked at it longingly; Rador saw the glance, interpreted it, and led me up the stepped, sharp slope into a rocky embrasure.

Here I was above the foliage, and everywhere the view was clear. Below me stretched the incredible bridge, with the frog people hurrying back and forth upon it. A pinnacle at my side hid the abyss. My eyes followed the cavern ledge. Above it the rock rose bare, but at the ends of the semi-circular strand the luxuriant vegetation began, stretching from the crimson shores back into far distances. Of browns and reds and yellows, like an autumn forest, was the foliage, with here and there patches of dark-green, as of conifers. Five miles or more, on each side, the forests swept, and then were lost to sight in the haze.

I turned and faced an immensity of crimson waters, unbroken, a true sea, if ever there was one. A breeze blew—the first real wind I had encountered in the hidden places; under it the surface, that had been as molten lacquer, rippled and dimpled. Little waves broke with a spray of rose-pears and rubies. The giant Medusæ drifted—stately, luminous, kaleidoscopic elfin moons.

Far down, peeping around a jutting tower of the cliff, I saw dipping with the motion of the waves a floating garden. The flowers, too, were luminous—indeed sparkling-gleaming brilliants of scarlet and vermilions lighter than the flood on which they lay, mauves and odd shades of reddish-blue. They gleamed and shone like a little lake of jewels.

Rador broke in upon my musings.

"Lakla comes! Let us go down."

It was a shy Lakla who came slowly around the

end of the path and, blushing furiously, held her hands out to Larry. And the Irishman took them, placed them over his heart, kissed them with a tenderness that had been lacking in the half-mocking, half-fierce caresses he had given the priestess. She blushed deeper, holding out the tapering fingers—then pressed them to her own heart.

"I like the touch of your lips, Larry," she whispered. "They warm me here"—she pressed her heart again—"and they send little sparkles of light through me." Her brows tilted perplexedly, accenting the nuance of diablerie, delicate and fascinating, that they cast upon the flower face.

"Do you?" whispered the O'Keefe fervently. "Do you, Lakla?" He bent toward her. She caught the amused glance of Rador; drew herself aside half-haughtily.

"Rador," she said, "is it not time that you and the strong one, Olaf, were setting forth?"

"Truly it is, handmaiden," he answered respectfully enough—yet with a current of laughter under his words. "But as you know the strong one, Olaf, wished to see his friends here before we were gone—and he comes even now," he added, glancing down the pathway, along which came striding the Norseman.

As he faced us I saw that a transformation had been wrought in him. Gone was the pitiful seeking, and gone too the just as pitiful hope. The set face softened as he looked at the Golden Girl and bowed low to her. He thrust a hand to O'Keefe and to me.

"There is to be battle," he said. "I go with Rador to call the armies of these frog people. As for me—Lakla has spoken. There is no hope for—for mine Helma in life, but there is hope that we destroy the Shining Devil and give mine Helma peace. And with that I am well content, *Ja! Well content!*" He gripped our hands again. "We will fight!" he muttered. "*Ja!* And I will have vengeance!" The sternness returned; and with a salute Rador and he were gone.

Two great tears rolled from the golden eyes of Lakla.

"Not even the Silent Ones can heal those the Shining One has taken," she said. "He asked me—and it was better that I tell him. It is part of the Three's—punishment—but of that you will soon learn," she went on hurriedly. "Ask me no questions now of the Silent Ones. I thought it better for Olaf to go with Rador, to busy himself, to give his mind other than sorrow upon which to feed."

Up the path came five of the frog-women, bearing platters and ewers. Their bracelets and anklets of jewels were tinkling; their middles covered with short kirtles of woven cloth studded with the sparkling ornaments.

**A**ND here let me say that if I have given the impression that the *Akka* are simply magnified frogs, I regret it. Froglike they are, and hence my phrase for them—but as unlike the frog, as we know it, as man is unlike the chimpanzee. Springing, I hazard, from the stegocephalia, the ancestor of the frogs, these batrachians followed

a different line of evolution and acquired the upper position just as man did his from the four-footed folk.

The great staring eyes, the shape of the muzzle were froglike, but the highly developed brain had set upon the head and shape of it vital differences. The forehead, for instance, was not low, flat, and retreating—its frontal arch was well defined. The head was, in sense, shapely, and with the females the great horny carapace that stood over it like a fantastic helmet was much modified, as were the spurs that were so formidable in the male; coloration was different also. The torso was upright; the legs a little bent, giving them their crouching gait—but I wander from my subject.'

They set their burdens down. Larry looked at them with interest.

"You surely have those things well trained, Lakla," he said.

"*Things!*" The handmaiden arose, eyes flashing with indignation. "You call my *Akka* things!"

"Well," said Larry, a bit taken aback, "what do you call them?"

"My *Akka* are a people," she retorted. "As much a people as your race or mine. They are good and loyal, and they have speech and arts, and they slay not, save for food or to protect themselves. And I think them beautiful, Larry, *beautiful!*" She stamped her foot. "And you call them—*things!*"

Beautiful! These? Yet, after all, they were, in their grotesque fashion. And to Lakla, surrounded by them, from babyhood, they were not strange, at all. Why shouldn't she think them beautiful? The same thought must have struck O'Keefe, for he flushed guiltily.

"I think them beautiful, too, Lakla," he said remorsefully. "It's my not knowing your tongue too well that traps me. *Truly*, I think them beautiful—I'd tell them so, if I knew their talk."

Lakla dimpled, laughed—spoke to the attendants in that strange speech that was unquestionably a language; they bridled, looked at O'Keefe with fantastic coquetry, clacked and boomed softly among themselves.

"They say they like *you* better than the men of Muria," laughed Lakla.

"Did I ever think I'd be swapping compliments with lady frogs!" he murmured to me. "Buck up, Larry—keep your eyes on the captive Irish princess!" he muttered to himself.

"Rador goes to meet one of the *ladala* who is slipping through with news," said the Golden Girl as we addressed ourselves to the food. "Then, with Nak, he and Olaf go to muster the *Akka*—for there will be battle, and we must prepare. Nak," she added, "is he who went before me when you were dancing with Yolara, Larry." She stole a swift, mischievous glance at him. "He is head-man of all the *Akka*."

<sup>1</sup>The *Akka* are viviparous. The female produces progeny at five-year intervals, never more than two at a time. They are monogamous, like certain of our own *Ranidae*. Pending my monograph upon what little I had time to learn of their interesting habits and customs, the curious will find instruction and entertainment in Brandes and Schenichen's *Brutpflege der Schwanstlosen Batrachier*, p. 395; and Lillian V. Sampson's *Unusual Modes of Breeding among Anura*, Amer. Nat. xxxiv, 1900.—W. T. G.

"Just what forces can we muster against them when they come, darlin'?" said Larry.

"Darlin'?"—the Golden Girl had caught the caress of the word—"what's that?"

"It's a little word that means Lakla," he answered. "It does—that is, when I say it; when you say it, then it means Larry."

"I like that word," mused Lakla.

"You can even say Larry darlin'!" suggested O'Keefe.

"Larry darlin'!" said Lakla, "When they come we shall have first of all my *Akka*—"

"Can they fight, *mavourneen?*" interrupted Larry.

"Can they fight! My *Akka*!" Again her eyes flashed. "They will fight to the last of them—with the spears that give the swift rotting, covered, as they are, with the jelly of those *Saddy* there—" She pointed through a rift in the foliage across which, on the surface of the sea, was floating one of the moon globes—and now I know why Rador had warned Larry against a plunge there. "With spears and clubs and with teeth and nails and spurs—they are a strong and brave people, Larry—darlin', and though they hurl the *Keth* at them, it is slow to work upon them, and they slay even while they are passing into the nothingness!"

"And have we none of the *Keth?*" he asked.

"No"—she shook her head—"none of their weapons have we here, although it was—it was the Ancient Ones who shaped them."

"But the Three are of the Ancient Ones?" I cried. "Surely they can tell—"

"No," she said slowly. "No—there is something you must know—and soon; and then the Silent Ones say you will understand. You, especially, Goodwin, who worship wisdom."

"Then," said Larry, "we have the *Akka*; and we have the four men of us, and among us three guns and about a hundred cartridges—an'—an' the power of the Three—but what about the Shining One, Fireworks—"

"I do not know." Again the indecision that had been in her eyes when Yolara had launched her defiance crept back. "The Shining One is strong—and he has his—slaves!"

**W**ELL, we'd better get busy good and quick!" the O'Keefe's voice rang. But Lakla, for some reason of her own, would pursue the matter no further. The trouble fled from her eyes—they danced.

"Larry, darlin'!" she murmured. "I like the touch of your lips—"

"You do?" he whispered, all thought flying of anything but the beautiful, provocative face so close to his. "Then, *acushla*, you're goin' to get acquainted with 'em! Turn your head, Doc!" he said.

And I turned it. There was quite a long silence, broken by an interested, soft outburst of gentle boominings from the serving frog-maids. I stole a glance behind me. Lakla's head lay on the Irishman's shoulder, the golden eyes misty sunpools of love and adoration; and the O'Keefe, a new look of power and strength upon his clear-cut features.

was gazing down into them with that look which rises only from the heart touched for the first time with that true, all-powerful love, which is the pulse of the universe itself, the real music of the spheres of which Plato dreamed, the love that is stronger than death itself, immortal as the high gods and the true soul of all that mystery we call life.

Then Lakla raised her hands, pressed down Larry's head, kissed him between the eyes, drew herself with a trembling little laugh from his embrace.

"The future Mrs. Larry O'Keefe, Goodwin," said Larry to me a little unsteadily.

I took their hands—and Lakla kissed me!

She turned to the booming—smiling—frog-maids; gave them some command, for they filed away down the path. Suddenly I felt, well, a little superfluous.

"If you don't mind," I said, "I think I'll go up the path there again and look about."

But they were so engrossed with each other that they did not even hear me—so I walked away, up to the embrasure where Rador had taken me. The movement of the batrachians over the bridge had ceased. Dimly at the far end I could see the cluster of the garrison. My thoughts flew back to Lakla and Larry.

What was to be the end?

If we won, if we were able to pass from this place, could she live in our world? A product of these caverns with their atmosphere and light that seemed in some subtle way to be both food and drink—how would she react to the unfamiliar foods and air and light of outer earth? Further, here so far as I was able to discover, there were no malignant bacilli—what immunity could Lakla have then to those microscopic evils without, against which our ages of sickness and death have brought for us a modicum of protection? I began to be oppressed. Surely they had been long enough by themselves. I went down the path.

I heard Larry.

"It's a green land, *mavourneen*. And the sea rocks and dimples around it—blue as the heavens, green as the isle itself, and foam horses toss their white manes, and the great clean winds blow over it, and the sun shines down on it like your eyes, *acushla*—"

"And are you a king of Ireland, Larry darlin'?"  
Thus Lakla—

But enough!

At last we turned to go—and around the corner of the path I caught another glimpse of what I have called the lake of jewels. I pointed to it.

"Those are lovely flowers, Lakla," I said. "I have never seen anything like them in the place from whence we come."

She followed my pointing finger—laughed.

"Come," she said, "let me show you them."

She ran down an intersecting way, we following; came out of it upon a little ledge close to the brink, three feet or more I suppose about it. The Golden Girl's voice rang out in a high-pitched, tremulous, throbbing call.

The lake of jewels stirred as though a breeze had passed over it; stirred, shook, and then began to move swiftly, a shimmering torrent of shining

flowers down upon us! She called again, the movement became more rapid; the gem blooms streamed closer—closer, wavering, shifting, winding—at our very feet. Above them hovered a little radiant mist. The Golden Girl leaned over; called softly, and up from the sparkling mass shot a green vine whose heads were five flowers of flaming ruby—shot up, flew into her hand and coiled about the white arm, its quintette of lambent blossoms—regarding us!

It was the thing Lakla had called the *Yekta*; that with which she had threatened the priestess; the thing that carried the dreadful death—and the Golden Girl was handling it like a rose!

Larry swore—I looked at the thing more closely. It was a hydroid, a development of that strange animal-vegetable that, sometimes almost microscopic, waves in the sea depths like a cluster of flowers paralyzing its prey with the mysterious force that dwells in its blossom heads.<sup>1</sup>

"Put it down, Lakla," the distress in O'Keefe's voice was deep. Lakla laughed mischievously, caught the real fear for her in his eyes; opened her hand, gave another faint call—and back it flew to its fellows.

"Why, it wouldn't hurt me, Larry!" she expostulated. "They know me!"

"Put it down!" he repeated hoarsely.

She sighed, gave another sweet, prolonged call. The lake of gems—rubies and amethysts, mauves and scarlet-tinged blues—wavered and shook even as it had before—and swept swiftly back to that place whence she had drawn them!

Then, with Larry and Lakla walking ahead, white arm about his brown neck; the O'Keefe still expostulating, the handmaiden laughing merrily, we passed through her bower to the domed castle.

Glancing through a cleft I caught sight again of the far end of the bridge; noted among the clustered figures of its garrison of the frog-men a movement, a flashing of green fire like marsh-lights on spear tips; wondered idly what it was, and then, other thoughts crowding in, followed along, head bent, behind the pair who had found in what was Olaf's hell, their true paradise.

<sup>1</sup>The *Yekta* of the Crimson Sea are as extraordinary developments of hydroid forms as the giant *Medusa*, of which, of course, they are not too remote cousins. The closest resemblances to them in outer water forms are among the *Gymnophlastic Hydroids*, notably *Clavellina prolifera*, a most interesting ambulatory form of six tentacles. Almost every bather in Southern waters, Northern too, knows the pain that contact with certain "jelly fish" produces. The *Yekta*'s development was prodigious and, to us, monstrous. It secretes in its five heads an almost incredibly swiftly acting poison which I suspect, for I had no chance to verify the theory, destroys the entire nervous system to the accompaniment of truly infernal agony; carrying at the same time the illusion that the torment stretches through infinites of time. Both ether and nitrous oxide gas produce in the majority this sensation of time extension, without, of course the pain symptom. What Lakla called the *Yekta* kiss is I imagine about as close to the orthodox idea of Hell as can be conceived. The secret of her control over them I had no opportunity of learning in the rush of events that followed. Knowledge of the appalling effects of their touch came, she told me, from those few "who had been kissed so lightly" that they recovered. Certainly nothing, not even the Shining One, was dreaded by the Murians as these were.—W. T. G.

## CHAPTER XXVII

## The Coming of Yolara

**N**EVER was there such a girl!" Thus Larry, dreamily, leaning head in hand on one of the wide divans of the chamber where Lakle had left us, pleading service to the Silent Ones.

"An', by the faith and the honor of the O'Keefes, an' by my dead mother's soul may God do me with me as I do by her!" he whispered fervently.

He relapsed into open-eyed dreaming.

I walked about the room, examining it—the first opportunity I had gained to inspect carefully any of the rooms in the abode of the Three. It was octagonal, carpeted with the thick rugs that seemed almost as though woven of soft mineral wool, faintly shimmering, palest blue. I paced its diagonal; it was fifty yards; the ceiling was arched, and either of pale rose metal or metallic covering; it collected the light from the high, slitted windows, and shed it, diffused, through the room.

Around the octagon ran a low gallery not two feet from the floor, balustraded with slender pillars, close set; broken at opposite curtained entrances over which hung thick, dull-gold curtainings giving the same suggestion of metallic or mineral substance as the rugs. Set within each of the eight sides, above the balcony, were colossal slabs of lapis lazuli, inset with graceful but unplaceable designs in scarlet and sapphire blue.

There was the great divan on which mused Larry; two smaller ones; half a dozen low seats and chairs carved apparently of ivory and of dull soft gold.

Most curious were tripods, strong, pikewise legs of golden metal four feet high, holding small circles of the lapis with intaglios of one curious symbol somewhat resembling the ideographs of the Chinese.

There was no dust—nowhere in these caverned spaces had I found this constant companion of ours in the world overhead. My eyes caught a sparkle from a corner. Pursuing it I found upon one of the low seats a flat, clear crystal oval, remarkably like a lens. I took it and stepped up on the balcony. Standing on tiptoe I found I commanded from the bottom of a window slit a view of the bridge approach. Scanning it I could see no trace of the garrison there, nor of the green spear flashes. I placed the crystal to my eyes—and with a disconcerting abruptness the cavern mouth leaped before me, apparently not a hundred feet away; decidedly the crystal was a very excellent lens—but where were the guards?

I peered closely. Nothing! But now against the aperture I saw a score or more of tiny, dancing sparks. An optical illusion, I thought, and turned the crystal in another direction. There were no sparklings there. I turned it back again—and there they were. And what were they like? Realization came to me—they were like the little, dancing, radiant atoms that had played for a time about the emptiness where had stood Sangar of the Lower Waters before he had been shaken into the

nothingness! And that green light I had noticed—the Keth!

A cry on my lips, I turned to Larry—and the cry died as the heavy curtainings at the entrance on my right undulated, parted as though a body had slipped through, shook and parted again and again—with the dreadful passing of unseen things!

"Larry!" I cried. "Here! Quick!"

He leaped to his feet, gazed about wildly—and disappeared! Yes—vanished from my sight like the snuffed flame of a candle or as though something moving with the speed of light itself had snatched him away!

Then from the divan came the sounds of struggle, the hissing of straining breaths, the noise of Larry cursing. I leaped over the balustrade, drawing my own pistol—was caught in a pair of mighty arms, my elbows crushed to my sides, drawn down until my face pressed close to a broad, hairy breast—and through that obstacle—formless, shadowless, transparent as air itself—I could still see the battle on the divan!

Now there were two sharp reports; the struggle abruptly ceased. From a point not a foot over the great couch, as though oozing from the air itself, blood began to drop, faster and ever faster, pouring out of nothingness.

And out of that same air, now a dozen feet away, leaped the face of Larry—bodyless, poised six feet above the floor, blazing with rage—floating weirdly, uncannily to a hideous degree, in vacancy.

His hands flashed out—armless; they wavered, appearing, disappearing—swiftly tearing something from him. Then there, feet hidden, stiff on legs that vanished at the ankles, striking out into vision with all the dizzy abruptness with which he had been stricken from sight was the O'Keefe, a smoking pistol in hand.

And ever that red stream trickled out of vacancy and spread over the couch, dripping to the floor.

**I**MADE a mighty movement to escape; was held more firmly—and then close to the face of Larry, flashing out with that terrifying instantaneousness even as had his, was the head of Yolara, as devilishly mocking as I had ever seen it, the cruelty shining through it like delicate white flames from hell—and beautiful!

"Stir not! Strike not—until I command!" She flung the words beyond her, addressed to the invisible ones who had accompanied her; whose presences I sensed filling the chamber. The floating, beautiful head, crowned high with corn-silk hair, darted toward the Irishman. He took a swift step backward. The eyes of the priestess deepened toward purple; sparkled with malice.

"So," she said. "So, Larree—you thought you could go from me so easily!" She laughed softly. "In my hidden hand I hold the Keth cone," she murmured. "Before you can raise the death tube I can smite you—and will. And consider, Larree, if the handmaiden, the choya comes, I can vanish—so"—the mocking head disappeared, burst forth again—"and slay her with the Keth—or bid my people seize her and bear her to the Shining One!"

Tiny beads of sweat stood out on O'Keefe's fore-

head, and I knew he was thinking not of himself, but of Lakla.

"What do you want with me, Yolara?" he asked hoarsely.

"Nay," came the mocking voice. "Not Yolara to you, *Larree*—call me by those sweet names you taught me—Honey of the Wild Bee-e-s, Net of Hearts—" Again her laughter tinkled.

"What do you want with me?" his voice was strained, the lips rigid.

"Ah, you are afraid, *Larree*." There was diabolic jubilation in the words. "What should I want but that you return with me? Why else did I creep through the lair of the dragon worm and pass the path of perils but to ask you that? And the *choya* guards you not well?" Again she laughed. "We came to the cavern's end and there were her *Akka*. And the *Akka* can see us—as shadows. But it was my desire to surprise you with my coming, *Larree*," the voice was silken. "And I feared that they would hasten to be first to bring you that message to delight in your joy. And so, *Larree*, I loosed the *Keth* upon them—and gave them peace and rest within the nothingness. And the portal below was open—almost in welcome!"

Once more the malignant, silver pealing of her laughter.

"What do you want with me?" There was wrath in his eyes, and plainly he strove for control.

"Want!" the silver voice hissed, grew calm. "Do not Siya and Siyana grieve that the rite I pledged them is but half done—and do they not desire it finished? And am I not beautiful? More beautiful than your *choya*?"

The fiendishness died from the eyes; they grew blue, wondrous; the veil of invisibility slipped down from the neck, the shoulders, half revealing the gleaming breasts. And weird, weird beyond all telling was that exquisite head and bust floating there in air—and beautiful, sinisterly beautiful beyond all telling, too. So even might Lilith, the serpent woman, have shown herself tempting Adam!

"And perhaps," she said; "perhaps I want you because I hate you; perhaps because I love you—or perhaps for Lugur or perhaps for the Shining One."

"And if I go with you?" He said it quietly.

"Then shall I spare the handmaiden—and—who knows?—take back my armies that even now gather at the portal and let the Silent Ones rot in peace in their abode—from which they had no power to keep me," she added venomously.

"You will swear that, Yolara; swear to go without harming the handmaiden? he asked eagerly. The little devils danced in her eyes. I wrenched my face from the smothering contact.

"Don't trust her, Larry!" I cried—and again the grip choked me.

"Is that devil in front of you or behind you, old man?" he asked quietly, eyes never leaving the priestess. "If he's in front I'll take a chance and wing him—and then you scot and warn Lakla."

But I could not answer; nor, remembering Yolara's threat, would I, had I been able.

"Decide quickly!" There was cold threat in her voice.

The curtains toward which O'Keefe had slowly, step by step, drawn close, opened. They framed the handmaiden! The face of Yolara changed to that gorgon mask that had transformed it once before at sight of the Golden Girl. In her blind rage she forgot to cast the occulting veil. Her hand darted like a snake out of the folds; poisoning itself with the little silver cone aimed at Lakla.

But before it was wholly poised, before the priestess could loose its force, the handmaiden was upon her. Swift as the lithe white wolf hound she leaped, and one slender hand gripped Yolara's throat, the other the wrist that lifted the quivering death; white limbs wrapped about the hidden ones. I saw the golden head bend, the hand that held the *Keth* swept up with a vicious jerk; saw Lakla's teeth sink into the wrist—the blood spurt forth and heard the priestess shriek. The cone fell, bounded toward me; with all my strength I wrenched free the hand that held my pistol, thrust it against the pressing breast and fired.

The clasp upon me relaxed; a red rain stained me; at my feet a little stream of blood jettied; a hand thrust itself from nothingness, clawed—and was still.

Now Yolara was down, Lakla meshed in her writhings and fighting like some wild mother whose babes are serpent menaced. Over the two of them, astride, stood the O'Keefe, a pike from one of the high tripods in his hand—thrusting, parrying, beating on every side as with a broadsword against poniard-clutching hands that thrust themselves out of vacancy striving to strike him; stepping here and there, always covering, protecting Lakla with his own body even as a cave-man of old who does battle with his mate for their lives.

The sword-club struck—and on the floor lay the half body of a dwarf, writhing with vanishments and reappearings of legs and arms. Beside him was the shattered tripod from which Larry had wrenched his weapon. I flung myself upon it, dashed it down to break loose one of the remaining supports, struck in midfall one of the unseen even as his dagger darted toward me! The seat splintered, leaving in my clutch a golden bar. I jumped to Larry's side, guarding his back, whirling it like a staff; felt it crunch once—twice—through unseen bone and muscle.

**A**T the door was a booming. Into the chamber rushed a dozen of the frog-men. While some guarded the entrances, others leaped straight to us, forming a circle about us, began to strike with talons and spurs at unseen things that screamed and sought to escape. Now here and there about the blue rugs great stains of blood appeared; heads of dwarfs, torn arms and gashed bodies, half occulted, half revealed. And at last the priestess lay silent, vanquished, white body gleaming with that uncanny—fragmentariness—from her torn robes. The O'Keefe reached down, drew Lakla from her. Shakily, Yolara rose to her feet. The handmaiden, face still blazing wrath, stepped before her; with difficulty she steadied her voice.

"Yolara," she said, "you have defied the Silent Ones, you have desecrated their abode, you came

to slay these men who are the guests of the Silent Ones and me, who am their handmaiden—why did you do these things?"

"I came for him!" gasped the priestess; she pointed to O'Keefe.

"Why?" asked Lakla.

"Because he is pledged to me," replied Yolara, all the devils that were hers in her face. "Because he wooed me! Because he is mine!"

"That is a lie!" The handmaiden's voice shook with rage. "It is a lie! But here and now he shall choose, Yolara. And if you he choose, you and he shall go forth from here unmolested—for Yolara, it is his happiness that I most desire, and if you are that happiness—you shall go together. And now, Larry, choose!"

Swiftly she stepped beside the priestess; swiftly wrenched the last shreds of the hiding robes from her.

There they stood—Yolara with but the filmiest net of gauze about her wonderful body; gleaming flesh shining through it; serpent woman—and wonderful, too, beyond the dreams even of Phidias—and hell-fire glowing from the purple eyes.

And Lakla, like a girl of the Vikings, like one of those warrior maids who stood and fought for dun and babes at the side of those old heroes of Larry's own green isle; translucent ivory lambent through the rents of her torn draperies, and in the wide, golden eyes flaming wrath, indeed—not the diabolic flames of the priestess but the righteous wrath of some soul that looking out of paradise sees vile wrong in the doing.

"Lakla," the O'Keefe's voice was subdued, hurt, "there is no choice. I love you and only you—and have from the moment I saw you. It's not easy—this. God, Goodwin, I feel like an utter cad," he flashed at me. "There is no choice, Lakla," he ended, eyes steady upon hers.

The priestess's face grew deadlier still.

"What will you do with me?" she asked.

"Keep you," I said, "as hostage."

O'Keefe was silent; the Golden Girl shook her head.

"Well would I like to," her face grew dreamling; "but the Silent Ones say—no; they bid me let you go, Yolara——"

"The Silent Ones," the priestess laughed. "You, Lakla! You fear, perhaps, to let me tarry here too close!"

Storm gathered again in the handmaiden's eyes; she forced it back.

"No," she answered, "the Silent Ones so command—and for their own purposes. Yet do I think, Yolara, that you will have little time to feed your wickedness—tell that to Lugar—and to your Shining One!" she added slowly."

Mockery and disbelief rode high in the priestess's pose. "Am I to return alone—like this?" she asked.

"Nay, Yolara, nay; you shall be accompanied," said Lakla; "and by those who will guard—and watch—you well. They are here even now."

The hangings parted, and into the chamber came Olaf and Rador.

The priestess met the fierce hatred and contempt

in the eyes of the Norseman—and for the first time lost her bravado.

"Let not *him* go with me," she gasped—her eyes searched the floor frantically.

"He goes with you," said Lakla, and threw about Yolara a swathing that covered the exquisite, alluring body. "And you shall pass through the Portal, not skulk along the path of the worm!"

She bent to Rador, whispered to him; he nodded; she had told him, I supposed, the secret of its opening.

"Come," he said, and with the ice-eyed giant behind her, Yolara, head bent, passed out of those hangings through which, but a little before, unseen, triumph in her grasp, she had slipped.

Then Lakla came to the unhappy O'Keefe, rested her hands on his shoulders, looked deep into his eyes.

"Did you woo her, even as she said?" she asked.

The Irishman flushed miserably.

"I did not," he said. "I was pleasant to her, of course, because I thought it would bring me quicker to you, darlin'!"

She looked at him doubtfully; then—

"I think you must have been *very*—pleasant!" was all she said—and leaning, kissed him forgivingly straight on the lips. An extremely direct maiden was Lakla, with a truly sovereign contempt for anything she might consider non-essentials; and at this moment I decided she was wiser even than I had thought her.

He stumbled, feet vanishing; reached down and picked up something that in the grasping turned his hand to air.

"One of the invisible cloaks," he said to me. "There must be quite a lot of them about—I guess Yolara brought her full staff of murderers. They're a bit shopworn, probably—but we're considerably better off with 'em in our hands than in hers. And they may come in handy—who knows?"

There was a choking rattle at my feet; half the head of a dwarf raised out of vacancy; beat twice upon the floor in death throes; fell back. Lakla shivered; gave a command. The frog-men moved about; peering here and there; lifting unseen folds revealing in stark rigidity torn form after form of the priestess's men.

Lakla had been right—her *Akka* were thorough fighters!

She called, and to her came the frog-woman who was her attendant. To her the handmaiden spoke, pointing to the batrachians who stood, paws and forearms melted beneath the robes they had gathered. She took them and passed out—more grotesque than ever, shattering into streaks of vacancies, reappearing with flickers of shining scale and yellow gems as the tattered pennants of invisibility fluttered about her.

The frog-men reached down, swung each a dead dwarf in his arms, and filed, booming triumphantly away.

And then I remembered the cone of the *Keth* which had slipped from Yolara's hand; knew it had been that for which her wild eyes searched. But look as closely as we might, search in every nook and corner as we did, we could not find it,

Had the dying hand of one of her men clutched it and had it been borne away with them? With the thought Larry and I raced after the scaled warriors, searched every body they carried. It was not there. Perhaps the priestess had found it, retrieved it swiftly without our seeing.

Whatever was true—the cone was gone. And what a weapon that one little holder of the shaking death could have been for us!

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### In the Lair of the Dweller

IT is with marked hesitation that I begin this chapter, because in it I must deal with an experience so contrary to every known law of physics as to seem impossible. Until this time, barring, of course, the mystery of the Dweller, I had encountered nothing that was not susceptible of naturalistic explanation; nothing, in a word, outside the domain of science itself; nothing that I would have felt hesitancy in reciting to my colleagues of the International Association of Science. Amazing, unfamiliar—advanced—as many of the phenomena were, still they lay well within the limits of what we have mapped as the possible; in regions, it is true, still virgin to the mind of man, but toward which that mind is steadily advancing.

But this—well, I confess that I have a theory that is naturalistic; but so abstruse, so difficult to make clear within the short confines of the space I have to give it, so dependent upon conceptions that even the highest-trained scientific brains find difficult to grasp, that I despair.

I can only say that the thing occurred; that it took place in precisely the manner I am about to narrate, and that I experienced it.

Yet, in justice to myself, I must open up some paths of preliminary approach toward the heart of the perplexity. And the first path is the realization that our world *whatever* it is, is certainly not the world as we see it! Regarding this I shall refer to a discourse upon "Gravitation and the Principle of Relativity," by the distinguished English physicist, Dr. A. S. Eddington, which I had the pleasure of hearing him deliver before the Royal Institution.<sup>1</sup>

I realize, of course, that it is not true logic to argue—"The world is not as we think it is—therefore, everything we think impossible is possible in it." Even if it be different, it is governed by law. The truly impossible is that which is outside law, and as nothing can be outside law, the impossible cannot exist.

The crux of the matter then becomes our determination whether what we think is impossible may or may not be possible under laws still beyond our knowledge.

I hope you will pardon me for this somewhat academic digression, but I felt it was necessary, and it has, at least, put me more at ease. And now to resume.

We had watched, Larry and I, the frog-men

throw the bodies of Yolara's assassins into the crimson waters. As vultures swoop down upon the dying, there came sailing swiftly to where the dead men floated, dozens of the luminous globes. Their slender, varicolored tentacles whipped out; the giant iridescent bubbles climbed over the cadavers. And as they touched them there was the swift dissolution, the melting away into putrescence of flesh and bone that I had witnessed when the dart touched fruit that time I had saved Rador—and upon this the Medusæ gorged; pulsing lamplantly; their wondrous colors shifting, changing, glowing stronger; elfin moons now indeed, but satellites whose glimmering beauty was fed by death; alembics of enchantment whose glorious hues were sucked from horror.

Sick, I turned away—O'Keeffe as pale as I; passed back into the corridor that had opened on the ledge from which we had watched; met Lakla hurrying toward us. Before she could speak there throbbed faintly about us a vast sighing. It grew into a murmur, a whispering, shook us—then passing like a presence, died away in far distance.

"The Portal has opened," said the handmaiden. A fainter sighing, like an echo of the other, mourned about us. "Yolara is gone," she said, "the Portal is closed. Now must we hasten—for the Three have commanded that you, Goodwin, and Larry and I tread that strange road of which I have spoken, and which Olaf may not take lest his heart break—and we must return ere he and Rador cross the bridge."

Her hand sought Larry's.

"Come!" said Lakla, and we walked on; down and down through hall after hall, flight upon flight of stairways. Deep, deep indeed, we must be beneath the domed castle—Lakla paused before a curved, smooth breast of the crimson stone rounding gently into the passage. She pressed its side; it revolved; we entered; it closed behind us.

The room, the—hollow—in which we stood was faceted like a diamond; and like a cut brilliant its sides glistened—though dully. Its shape was a deep oval, and our path dropped down to a circular, polished base, roughly two yards in diameter. Glancing behind me I saw that in the closing of the entrance there had been left no trace of it save the steps that led from where that entrance had been—and as I looked these steps turned, leaving us isolated upon the circle, only the faceted walls about us—and in each of the gleaming faces the three of us reflected—dimly. It was as though we were within a diamond egg whose graven angles had been turned inward.

BUT the oval was not perfect; at my right a screen cut it—a screen that gleamed with fugitive, fleeting luminescences—stretching from the side of our standing place up to the tip of the chamber; slightly convex and criss-crossed by millions of fine lines like those upon a spectroscope grating, but with this difference—that within each line I sensed the presence of multitudes of finer lines, dwindling into infinitude, ultra-microscopic, traced by some instrument compared to whose del-

<sup>1</sup>Reprinted in full in *Nature*, in which those sufficiently interested may peruse it.—W. T. G.

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icacy our finest tool would be as a crowbar to the needle of a micrometer.

A foot or two from it stood something like the standee of a compass, bearing, like it a cradled dial under whose crystal ran concentric rings of prisoned, lambent vapors, faintly blue. From the edge of the dial jutted a little shelf of crystal, a key-board, in which were cut eight small cups.

Within these cups the handmaiden placed her tapering fingers. She gazed down upon the disk; pressed a digit—and the screen behind us slipped noiselessly into another angle.

"Put your arm around my waist, Larry, darlin', and stand close," she murmured. "You, Goodwin, place your arm over my shoulder."

Wondering, I did as she bade; she pressed other fingers upon the shelf's indentations—three of the rings of vapor spun into intense light; raced around each other; from the screen behind us grew a radiance that held within itself all spectrums—not only those seen, but those *unseen* by man's eyes. It waxed brilliant and ever more brilliant, all suffusing, passing through me as day streams through a window pane!

The enclosing facets burst into a blaze of coruscations, and in each sparkling panel I saw our images, shaken and torn like pennants in a whirlwind. I turned to look—was stopped by the handmaiden's swift command: "Turn not—on your life!"

The radiance behind me grew; was a rushing tempest of light in which I was but the shadow of a shadow. I heard, but not with my ears—nay with *mind* itself—a vast roaring; an ordered tumult of sound that came hurling from the outposts of space; approaching—rushing—hurricane out of the heart of the cosmos—closer, closer. It wrapped itself about us with unearthly mighty arms.

And brilliant, ever more brilliant, streamed the radiance through us.

The faceted walls dimmed; in front of me they melted, diaphanously, like a gelatinous wall in a blast of flame; through their vanishing, under the torrent of driving light, the unthinkable, impalpable tornado, I began to move, slowly—then ever more swiftly.

Still the roaring grew; the radiance streamed—ever faster we went. Cutting down through the length, the *extension* of me, dropped a wall of rock, foreshortened, clenched close; I caught a glimpse of the elfin gardens; they whirled, contracted, into a thin—slice—of color that was a part of me; another wall of rock shrinking into thin wedge through which I flew, and that at once took its place within me like a card slipped beside those others!

Flashing around me, and from Lakla and O'Keefe, were nimbus of flickering scarlet flames. And always the steady hurling forward—appallingly mechanical.

Another barrier of rock—a gleam of white waters incorporating themselves into my—*drawing out*—even as were the flowered moss lands, the slicing, rocky walls—still another rampart of cliff, dwindling instantly into the vertical plane of those others.

Our flight checked; we seemed to hover within, then to sway onward—slowly, cautiously.

A mist danced ahead of me—a mist that grew steadily thinner. We stopped, wavered—the mist cleared.

I looked out into translucent, green distances; shot with swift, prismatic gleamings; waves and pulsings of luminosity like midday sun glow through green, tropic waters; dancing, scintillating veils of sparkling atoms that flew, hither and yon, through depths of nebulous splendor!

And Lakla and Larry and I were, I saw, like shadow shaped upon a smooth breast of stone twenty feet or more above the surface of this place—a surface spangled with tiny white blossoms gleaming wanly through creeping veils of phosphorescence like smoke of moon fire. We were shadows—and yet we had substance; we were incorporated with, a part of, the rock—and yet we were living flesh and blood; we stretched—nor will I qualify this—we *stretched* through mile upon mile of space that weirdly enough gave at one and the same time an absolute certainty of immense horizontal lengths and a vertical concentration that contained nothing of length, nothing of space whatever; we stood there upon the face of the stone—and still we were *here* within the faceted oval before the screen of radiance!

"Steady!" It was Lakla's voice—and not beside me *there*, but at my ear close before the screen. "Steady, Goodwin! And—see!"

THE sparkling haze cleared. Enormous reaches stretched before me. Shimmering up through them, and as though growing in some medium thicker than air, was mass upon mass of verdure—fruiting trees and trees laden with pale blossoms, arbors and bowers of pallid blooms, like that sea fruit of oblivion—grapes of Lethe—that cling to the tide-swept walls of the caverns of the Hebrides.

Through them, beyond them, around and about them, drifted and eddied a horde—great as that with which Tamerlane swept down upon Rome, vast as the myriads which Genghis Khan rolled upon the califs—men and women and children—clothed in tatters, half nude and wholly naked; slant-eyed Chinese, sloe-eyed Malays, islanders black and brown and yellow, fierce-faced warriors of the Solomons with grizzled locks fantastically bedizened; Papuans, feline Javans, Dyaks of hill and shore; hook-nosed Phoenicians, Romans, straight-browed Greeks, and Vikings centuries *beyond* their lives; scores of the black-haired Murians; white faces of our own Westerners—men and women and children—drifting, eddying—each stamped with that mingled horror and rapture, eyes filled with ecstasy and terror entwined, marked by God and devil in embrace—the seal of the Shining One—the dead-alive; the lost ones!

The lot of the Dweller!

Soul-sick, I gazed. They lifted to us visages of dread; they swept down toward us, glaring upward—a bank against which other and still other waves of faces rolled, ere checked, paused; until as far as I could see, like billows piled upon an ever-grow-

ing barrier, they stretched beneath us—staring—staring!

Now there was a movement—far, far away; a concentrating of the lambency; the dead-alive swayed, oscillated, separated—forming a long lane against whose outskirts they crowded with avid, hungry insistence.

First only a luminous cloud, then a whirling pillar of splendors through the lane came—the Shining One. As it passed, the dead-alive swirled in its wake like leaves behind a whirlwind, eddying, twisting; and as the Dweller raced by them, brushing them with its spirallings and tentacles, they shone forth with unearthly, awesome gleamings—like vessels of alabaster in which wicks flare suddenly. And when it had passed they closed behind it, staring up at us once more.

The Dweller paused beneath us.

Out of the drifting ruck swam the body of Throckmartin! Throckmartin, my friend, to find whom I had gone to the pallid moon door; my friend whose call I had so laggardly followed. On his face was the Dweller's dreadful stamp; the lips were bloodless; the eyes were wide, lucent, something like pale phosphorescence gleaming within them—and soulless.

He stared straight up at me, unwinking, unrecognizing. Pressing against his side was a woman, young and gentle, and lovely—lovely even through the mask that lay upon her face. And her wide eyes, like Throckmartin's, glowed with the lurking, unholy fires. She pressed against him closely; though the hordes kept up the faint churning, these two kept ever together, as though bound by unseen fitters.

And I knew the girl for Edith, his wife, who in vain effort to save him had cast herself into the Dweller's embrace!

"Throckmartin!" I cried. "Throckmartin! I'm here!"

Did he hear? I know now, of course, he could not.

But then I waited—hope striving to break through the nightmare hands that gripped my heart.

Their wide eyes never left me. There was another movement about them, others pushed past them; they drifted back, swaying, eddying—and still staring were lost in the awful throng.

Vainly I strained my gaze to find them again, to force some sign of recognition, some awakening of the clean life we know. But they were gone. Try as I would I could not see them—nor Stanton and the northern woman named Thora who had been the first of that tragic party to be taken by the Dweller.

"Throckmartin!" I cried again, despairingly. My tears blinded me.

I felt Lakla's light touch.

"Steady," she commanded, pitifully. "Steady Goodwin. You cannot help them—now! Steady and—watch!"

Below us the Shining One had paused—spiralling, swirling, vibrant with all its translucent, devilish beauty; had paused and was contemplating us. Now I could see clearly that nucleus, that core shot through with flashing veins of radiance, that ever-

shifting shape of glory through the shroudings of shimmering, misty plumes, throbbing lacy opalescences, vaporous spirallings of prismatic phantom fires. Steady it hung the seven little moons of amethyst, of saffron, of emerald and azure and silver, of rose of life and moon white. They poised themselves like a diadem—calm, serene, immobile—and down from them into the Dweller, piercing plumes and swirls and spirals, ran countless tiny strands, radiations, finer than the finest spun thread of spider's web, gleaming filaments through which seemed to run—power—from the seven globes; like—yes, that was it—miniatures of the seven torrents of moon flame that poured through the hepta chromatic, high crystals in the Moon Pool's chamber roof.

Swam out of the coruscating haze the—face!

Both of man and of woman it was—like some ancient, androgynous deity of Etruscan fanes long dust, and yet neither woman nor man; human and unhuman; seapharic and sinister, benign and malefic—and still no more of these four than is flame, which is beautiful whether it warms or devours, or wind whether it feathers the trees or shatters them, or the wave which is wondrous whether it caresses or kills.

Subtly, undefinably it was of our world and of one not ours. Its lineaments flowed from another sphere, took fleeting familiar form—and as swiftly withdrew whence they had come; something amorphous, unearthly—as of unknown, unheeding, unseen gods rushing through the depths of starhung space; and still of our own earth, with the very soul of earth peering out from it, caught within it—and in some—unholy—way debased.

It had eyes—eyes that were now only shadows darkening within its luminosity like veils falling, and falling, opening windows into the unknowable; deepening into softly glowing blue pools, blue as the Moon Pool itself; then flashing out, and this only when the—face—bore its most human resemblance, into twin stars large almost as the crown of little moons; and with that same baffling suggestion of peep-holes into a world untrodden, alien, perilous to man!

"Steady!" came Lakla's voice, her body leaned against mine.

I gripped myself, my brain steadied, I looked again. And I saw that of body, at least body as we know it, the Shining One had none—noting but the throbbing, pulsing core streaked with lightning veins of rainbows; and around this, never still, sheathing it, the swirling, glorious vellings of its hell and heaven born radiance.

So the Dweller stood—and gazed.

Then up toward us swept a reaching, questing spiral!

Under my hand Lakla's shoulder quivered; Dead-Alive and their master vanished—I danced, flickered, within the rock; felt a swift sense of shrinking, of withdrawal; slice upon slice the carded walls of stone, of silvery waters, of elfin gardens slipped from me like cards withdrawn from a pack, one by one—slipped, wheeled, flattened, and lengthened out as I passed through them and they passed from me.

Gasping, shaken, weak, I stood within the faceted oval chamber; arm still about the hand-maiden's white shoulder; Larry's hand still clutching her girdle.

The roaring, impalpable gale from the cosmos was retreating to the outposts of space—was still; the intense, streaming, flooding radiance lessened—died.

"Now have you beheld," said Lakla, "and well you trod the road. And now shall you hear, even as the Silent Ones have commanded, what the Shining One is—and how it came to be."

The steps flashed back; the doorway into the chamber opened.

Larry as silent as I—we followed her through it.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### The Shaping of the Shining One

**W**E reached what I knew to be Lakla's own boudoir, if I may so call it. Smaller than any of the other chambers of the domed castle in which we had been, its intimacy was revealed not only by its faint fragrance but by its high mirrors of polished silver and various oddly wrought articles of the feminine toilet that lay here and there; things I afterward knew to be the work of the artisans of the *Akka*—and no mean metal workers were they. One of the window slits dropped almost to the floor, and at its base was a wide, comfortably cushioned seat commanding a view of the bridge and of the cavern ledge. To this the handmaiden beckoned us; sank upon it, drew Larry down beside her and motioned me to sit close to him.

"Now this," she said, "is what the Silent Ones have commanded me to tell you two: To you, Larry, that knowing you may weigh all things in your mind and answer as your spirit bids you a question that the Three will ask—and what that is I know not," she murmured, "and I, they say, must answer, too—and it—frightens me!"

The great golden eyes widened; darkened with dread; she sighed, shook her head impatiently.

"Not like us, and never like us," she spoke low, wonderingly, "the Silent Ones say were they. Nor were those from which they sprang like those from which we have come. Ancient, ancient beyond thought are the *Taithu*, the race of the Silent Ones. Far, far below this place where now we sit, close to earth heart itself were they born; and there they dwelt for time upon time, *laya* upon *laya* upon *laya*—with others, not like them, some of which have vanished time upon time agone, others that still dwell—below—in their—cradle.

"It is hard"—she hesitated—"hard to tell this—that slips through my mind—because I know so little that even as the Three told it to me it passed from me for lack of place to stand upon," she went on, quaintly. "Something there was of time when earth and sun were but cold mists in the—the heavens—something of these mists drawing together, whirling, whirling, faster and faster—drawing as they whirled more and more of the mists—growing larger, growing warm—forming at last into the globes they are, with others spinning around the sun—something of regions within this

globe where vast fire was imprisoned and bursting forth tore and rent the young orb—of one such bursting forth that sent what you call moon flying out to company us and left behind those spaces whence we now dwell—and of—of life particles that here and there below grew into the race of the Silent Ones, and those others—but not the *Akka* which, like you, they say came from above—and all this I do not understand—do you, Goodwin?" she appealed to me.

I nodded—for what she had related so fragmentarily was in reality an excellent approach to the Chamberlain-Moulton theory of a coalescing nebula contracting into the sun and its planets.

Astonishing was the recognition of this theory. Even more so was the reference to the life particles, the idea of Arrhenius, the great Swede, of life starting on earth through the dropping of minute, life spores, propelled through space by the driving power of light and, encountering favorable environment here, developing through the vast ages into man and every other living thing we know.<sup>1</sup>

Nor was it incredible that in the ancient nebula that was the matrix of our solar system similar, or rather *dissimilar* particles in all but the subtle essence we call life, might have become entangled and, resisting every cataclysm as they had resisted the absolute zero of outer space, found in these cavernous spaces their proper environment to develop into the race of the Silent Ones and—only they could tell what else!

"They say," the handmaiden's voice was surer, "they say that in their—cradle—near earth heart they grew; grew untroubled by the turmoil and disorder which flayed the surface of this globe. And they say it was a place of light and that strength came to them from earth heart—strength greater than you and those from which you sprang ever derived from sun.

"At last, ancient, ancient beyond all thought, they say again, was this time—they began to know, to—to—realize—themselves. And wisdom came ever more swiftly. Up from their cradle, because they did not wish to dwell longer with those—others—they came and found this place.

**W**HEN all the face of earth was covered with waters in which lived only tiny, hungry things that knew naught save hunger and its satisfaction, *they* had attained the wisdom that enabled them to make paths such as we have just travelled and to look out upon those waters! And *laya* upon *laya* thereafter, time upon time, they went upon the paths and watched the flood recede; saw great bare flats of steaming ooze appear on which crawled and splashed larger things which had grown from the tiny hungry ones; watched the flats rise higher and higher and green life begin to clothe them; saw mountains uplift and vanish.

"Ever the green life waxed and the things which

<sup>1</sup>Professor Svante August Arrhenius, in his *Worlds in the Making*—the conception that life is universally diffused, constantly emitted from all habitable worlds in the form of spores which traverse space for years and ages, the majority being ultimately destroyed by the heat of some blazing star, but some few finding a resting-place on globes which have reached the habitable stage.—W. T. G.

crept and crawled grew greater and took ever different forms; until at last came a time when the steaming mists lightened and the things which had begun as little more than tiny hungry mouths were huge and monstrous, so huge that the tallest of my *Akka* would not have reached the knee of the smallest of them.

"But in none of these, in *none*, was there—realization—of themselves, say the Three; naught but hunger driving, always driving them to still its crying.

"So for time upon time the race of the Silent Ones took the paths no more, placing aside the half-thought that they had of making their way to earth face even as they had made their way from beside earth heart. They turned wholly to the seeking of wisdom—and after other time on time they attained that which killed even the faintest shadow of the half-thought. For they crept far within the mysteries of life and death, they mastered the illusion of space, they lifted the veils of creation and of its twin destruction, and they stripped the covering from the flaming jewel of truth—but when they had crept within those mysteries they bid me tell you, Goodwin, they found ever other mysteries veiling the way; and after they had uncovered the jewel of truth they found it to be a gem of infinite facets and therefore not wholly to be read before eternity's unthinkable end!

"And for this they were glad—because now throughout eternity might they and theirs pursue knowledge over ways illimitable.

"They conquered light—light that sprang at their bidding from the nothingness that gives birth to all things and in which lie all things that are, have been and shall be; light that streamed through their bodies cleansing them of all dross; light that was food and drink; light that carried their vision afar or bore to them images out of space opening many windows through which they gazed down upon life on thousands upon thousands of the rushing worlds; light that was the flame of life itself and in which they bathed, ever renewing their own. They set radiant lamps within the stones, and of black light they wove the sheltering shadows and the shadows that slay.

"Arose from this people those Three—the Silent Ones. They led them all in wisdom so that in the Three grew—pride. And the Three built them this place in which we sit and set the portal in its place and withdrew from their kind to go alone into the mysteries and to map alone the facets of Truth Jewel.

"Then there came the ancestors of the—*Akka*; not as they are now, and glowing but faintly within them the spark of—self-realization. And the *Taithu* seeing this spark did not slay them. But they took the ancient, long untrodden paths and looked forth once more upon earth face. Now on the land were vast forests and a chaos of green life. On the shores things scaled and fanged, fought and devoured each other, and in the green life moved bodies great and small that slew and ran from those that would slay.

"They searched for the passage through which the *Akka* had come and closed it. Then the Three

took them and brought them here; and taught them and blew upon the spark until it burned ever stronger and in time they became much as they are now—my *Akka*.

"The Three took counsel after this and said—"We have strengthened life in these until it has become articulate; shall we not *create* life?" Again she hesitated, her eyes rapt, dreaming. "The Three are speaking," she murmured. "They have my tongue—"

And certainly, with an ease and rapidity as though she were but a voice through which minds far more facile, more powerful poured their thoughts, she spoke.

"**Y**EA," the golden voice was vibrant. "We said that what we would create should be of the spirit itself, speaking to us with the tongues of the far-flung stars, of the winds, of the waters, and of all upon and within these. Upon that universal matrix of matter, that mother of all things that you name the ether, we labored. Think not that her wondrous fertility is limited by what ye see on earth or what has been on earth from its beginning. Infinite, infinite are the forms the mother bears and countless are the energies that are part of her.

"By our wisdom we had fashioned many windows out of our abode and through them we stared into the faces of myriads of worlds, and upon them all were the children of ether even as the worlds themselves were her children.

"Watching we learned, and learning we formed that ye term the Dweller, which those without term—the Shining One. Within the Universal Mother we shaped it, to be a voice to tell us her secrets, a lamp to go before us lighting the mysteries. Out of the ether we fashioned it, giving it the soul of light that still ye know not nor perhaps ever may know, and with the essence of life that ye saw blossoming deep in the abyss and that is the pulse of earth heart we filled it. And we wrought with pain and with love, with yearning and with scorching pride and from our travail came the Shining One—our child!

"There is an energy beyond and above ether, a purposeful, sentient force that laps like an ocean the furthest-flung star, that transfuses all that ether bears, that sees and speaks and feels in us and in you, that is incorporate in beast and bird and reptile, in tree and grass and all living things, that sleeps in rock and stone, that finds sparkling tongue in jewel and star and in all dwellers within the firmament. And this ye call consciousness!

"We crowned the Shining One with the seven orbs of light which are the channels between it and the sentience we sought to make articulate, the portals through which flow its currents and so flowing, become real, vocal, self-realizant within our child.

"But as we shaped, there passed some of the essence of our pride; in giving will we had given power, perforce, to exercise that will for good or for evil, to speak or to be silent, to tell us what we wished of that which poured into it through the seven orbs or to withhold that knowledge itself; and in forging it from the immortal energies we had endowed it with their indifference; open to all con-

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sciousness it held within it the pole of utter joy and the pole of utter woe with all the arc that lies between; all the ecstasies of the countless worlds and suns and all their sorrows; all that ye symbolize as gods and all ye symbolize as devils—not negativating each other, for there is no such thing as negation, but holding them together, balancing them, encompassing them, pole upon pole!"

So this was the explanation of the entwined emotions of joy and terror that had changed so appallingly Throckmartin's face and the faces of all the Dweller's slaves!

The handmaiden's eyes grew bright, alert, again; the brooding passed from her face; the golden voice that had been so deep found its own familiar pitch.

"I listened while the Three spoke to you," she said. "Now the shaping of the Shining One had been a long, long travail and time had flown over the outer world *laya* upon *laya*. For a space the Shining One was content to dwell here; to be fed with the foods of light; to open the eyes of the Three to mystery upon mystery and to read for them facet after facet of the gem of truth. Yet as the tides of consciousness flowed through it they left behind shadowings and echoes of their burdens; and the Shining One grew stronger, always stronger of itself within itself. Its will strengthened and now not always was it the will of the Three; and the pride that was woven in the making of it waxed, while the love for them that its creators had set within it waned."

"Not ignorant were the *Taithu* of the work of the Three. First there were a few, then more and more who coveted the Shining One and who would have had the Three share with them the knowledge it drew in for them. But the Silent Ones in their pride, would not.

"**T**HREE came a time when its will was now all its own, and it rebelled, turning its gaze to the wider spaces beyond the Portal, offering itself to the many there who would serve it; tiring of the Three, their control and their abode.

"Now the Shining One has its limitations, even as we. Over water it can pass, through air and through fire; but pass it cannot, through rock or metal. So it sent a message—how I know not—to the *Taithu* who desired it, whispering to them the secret of the Portal. And when the time was ripe they opened the Portal and the Shining One passed through it to them; nor would it return to the Three though they commanded, and when they would have forced it they found that it had hived and hidden a knowledge that they could not overcome.

"Yet by their arts the Three could have shattered the seven shining orbs; but they would not because—they loved it!

"Those to whom it had gone built for it that place I have shown you, and they bowed to it and drew wisdom from it. And even they turned more and more from the ways in which the *Taithu* had walked—for it seemed that which came to the Shining One through the seven orbs had less and less of good and more and more of the power you call evil. Knowledge it gave and understanding, yes; but not that which, clear and serene, lights the paths of

right wisdom; rather were they flares pointing the dark roads that lead to—to the ultimate evil!

"Not all of the race of the Three followed the counsel of the Shining One. There were many, many, who would have none of it nor of its power. So were the *Taithu* split; and to this place where there had been none, came hatred, fear and suspicion. Those who pursued the ancient ways went to the Three and pleaded with them to destroy their work—and they would not, for still they loved it.

"Stronger grew the Dweller and less and less did it lay before its worshippers—for now so they had become—the fruits of its knowledge; and it grew—restless—turning its gaze upon earth face even as it had turned it from the Three. It whispered to the *Taithu* to take again the paths and look out upon the world. Lo! above them was a great fertile land on which dwelt an unfamiliar race, skilled in arts, seeking and finding wisdom—mankind! Mighty builders were they; vast were their cities and huge their temples of stone.

"They called their lands Muria and they worshipped a god Tharanaro whom they imagined to be the maker of all things, dwelling far away. They worshipped as closer gods, not indifferent but to be prayed to and to be propitiated, the moon and the sun. Two kings they had, each with his council and his court. One was high priest to the moon and the other high priest to the sun.

"The mass of this people were black-haired, but the sun king and his nobles were ruddy with hair like mine; and the moon king and his followers were like Yolara—or Lugur. And this, the Three say, Goodwin, came about because for time upon time the law had been that whenever a ruddy-haired or ashen-tressed child was born of the black-haired it became dedicated at once to either sun god or moon god, later wedding and bearing children only to their own kind. Until at last from the black-haired came no more of the light-locked ones, but the ruddy ones, being stronger, still arose from them."

## CHAPTER XXX

## The Building of the Moon Pool

**S**HE paused, running her long fingers through her own bronze-flecked ringlets. Selective breeding this, with a vengeance, I thought; an ancient experiment in heredity which of course would in time result in the stamping out of the tendency to depart from type that lies in all organisms; resulting, obviously, at last, in three fixed forms of black-haired, ruddy-haired, and silver-haired—but this, with a shock of realization it came to me, was also an accurate description of the dark-pollled *ladala*, their fair-haired rulers and of the golden-brown tressed *Lakla*!

How—questions began to stream through my mind; silenced by the handmaiden's voice.

"Above, far, far above the abode of the Shining One," she said, "was their greatest temple, holding the shrines both of sun and moon. All about it were other temples hidden behind mighty walls, each enclosing its own space and squared and ruled and standing within shallow lake; the sacred city, the city of the gods of this land——"

"It is the Nan-Matal that she is describing," I thought.

"Out upon all this looked the *Taithu* who were now but the servants of the Shining One as it had been the messenger of the Three," she went on. "When they returned the Shining One spoke to them, promising them dominion over all that they had seen, yea, *under It* dominion of all earth itself and later perhaps of other earths!

"In the Shining One had grown craft, cunning; knowledge to gain that which it desired. Therefore it told its *Taithu*—and mayhap told them truth—that not yet was it time for *them* to go forth; that slowly must they pass into that outer world, for they had sprung from heart of earth and even it lacked power to swirl unaided into and through the above. Then it counselled them, instructing them what to do. They hollowed the chamber wherein first I saw you, cutting their way to it that path down which from it you sped.

"It revealed to them that the force that is within moon flame is kin to the force that is within it, for the chamber of its birth was the chamber too of moon birth and into it went the subtle essences and powers that flow in that earth child; and it taught them how to make that which fills what you call the Moon Pool whose opening is close behind its Veil hanging upon the gleaming cliffs.

"When this was done it taught them how to make and how to place the seven lights through which moon flame streams into Moon Pool—the seven lights that are kin to its own seven orbs even as its fires are kin to moon fires—and which would open for it a path that it could tread. And all this the *Taithu* did, working so secretly that neither those of their race whose faces were set against the Shining One nor the busy men above knew aught of it.

"When it was done they moved up the path, clustering within the Moon Pool Chamber. Moon flame streamed through the seven globes, poured down upon the pool; they saw mists arise, embrace, and become one with the moon flame—and then up through Moon Pool, shaping itself within the mists of light, whirling, radiant—the Shining One!

"Almost free, almost loosed upon the world it coveted!

"Again it counselled them, and they pierced the passage whose portal you found first; set the fires within its stones, and revealing themselves to the moon king and his priests spake to them even as the Shining One had instructed.

"Now was the moon king filled with fear when he looked upon the *Taithu*, shrouded with protecting mists of light in Moon Pool Chamber, and heard their words. Yet, being crafty, he thought of the power that would be his if he heeded and how quickly the strength of the sun king would dwindle. So he and his made a pact with the Shining One's messengers.

"When next the moon was round and poured its flames down upon Moon Pool, the *Taithu* gathered there again, watched the child of the Three take shape within the pillars, speed away—and out! They heard a mighty shouting, a tumult of terror, of awe and of worship; a silence; a vast sighing—

and they waited, wrapped in their mists of light, for they feared to follow nor were they near the paths that would have enabled them to look without.

"Another tumult—and back came the Shining One, murmuring with joy, pulsing, triumphant, and clasped within its vapors a man and woman, ruddy-haired, golden-eyed, in whose faces rapture and horror lay side by side—gloriously, hideously. And still holding them it danced above the Moon Pool and—sank!

"Now must I be brief. *Lat* after *lat* the Shining One went forth, returning with its sacrifices. And stronger after each it grew—and gayer and more cruel. Ever when it passed with its prey toward the pool, the *Taithu* who watched felt a swift, strong intoxication, a drunkenness of spirit, streaming from it to them. And the Shining One forgot what it had promised them of dominion—and in this new evil delight they too forgot.

**T**HE outer land was torn with hatred and open strife. The moon king and his kind, through the guidance of the evil *Taithu* and the favor of the Shining One, had become powerful and the sun king and his were darkened. And the moon priests preached that the child of the Three was the moon god itself come to dwell with them.

"Now vast tides arose and when they withdrew they took with them great portions of this country. And the land itself began to sink. Then said the moon king that the moon had called to ocean to destroy because wroth that another than he was worshipped. The people believed and there was slaughter. When it was over there was no more a sun king nor any of the ruddy-haired folk; slain were they, slain down to the babe at breast.

"But still the tides swept higher; still dwindled the land!

"As it shrank multitudes of the fleeing people were led through Moon Pool Chamber and carried here. They were what now are called the *ladala*, and they were given place and set to work; and they thrived. Came many of the fair-haired; and they were given dwellings. They sat beside the dancing of the Shining One; they learned—not all, only a little part but that little enough—of their arts. And even the Shining One danced more gaily out there within the black amphitheatre; grew ever stronger—and ever the hordes of its slaves behind the Veil increased.

"Nor did the *Taithu* who clung to the old ways check this—they could not. By the sinking of the land above their own spaces were imperilled. All of their strength and all of their wisdom it took to keep this land from perishing; nor had they help from those others mad for the poison of the Shining One; and they had no time to deal with them nor the earth race with whom they had foregathered.

"At last came a slow, vast flood. It rolled even to the bases of the walled islets of the city of the gods—and within these now were all that were left of my people on earth face.

"I am of those people," she paused, looking at me proudly, "one of the daughters of the sun king whose seed is still alive in the *ladala*!"

As Larry opened his mouth to speak she waved a silencing hand.

"This tide did not recede," she went on. "And after a time the remnant, the moon king leading them, joined those who had already fled below. The rocks became still, the quakings ceased, and now those Ancient Ones who had been laboring could take breath. And anger grew within them as they looked upon the work of their evil kin. Again they sought the Three—and the Three now knew what they had done and their pride was humbled. They would not slay the Shining One themselves, for still they loved it; but they instructed these others how to undo their work; how also they might destroy the evil *Taithu* were it necessary.

"Armed with the wisdom of the Three they went forth—but now the Shining One was strong indeed. They could not slay it!

"Nay, it knew and was prepared; they could not even pass beyond its Veil nor seal its abode. Ah, strong, strong, mighty of will, full of craft and cunning had the Shining One become. So they turned upon their kind who had gone astray and made them perish, to the last. The Shining One came not to the aid of its servants—though they called; for within its will was the thought that they were of no further use to it; that it would rest awhile and dance with them—who had so little of the power and wisdom of its *Taithu* and therefore no reins upon it. And while this was happening black-haired and fair-haired ran and hid and were but shaking vessels of terror.

**T**HIS Ancient Ones took counsel. This was their decision; that they would go from the gardens before the Silver Waters—leaving, since they could not kill it, the Shining One with its worshippers. They sealed the mouth of the passage that leads to the Moon Pool Chamber and they changed the face of the cliff so that none might tell where it had been. But the passage itself they left open—having foreknowledge I think, of a thing that was to come to pass in the far future—perhaps it was your journey here, my Larry and Goodwin—verily I think so. And they destroyed all the ways save that which we three trod to the Dweller's abode.

"For the last time they went to the Three—to pass sentence upon them. This was the doom—that here they should remain, alone, among the *Akka*, served by them, until that time dawned when they would have will to destroy the evil they had created—and even now—loved; nor might they seek death, nor follow their judges until this had come to pass. This was the doom they put upon the Three for the wickedness that had sprung from their pride, and they strengthened it with their arts that it might not be broken.

"Then they passed—to a far land they had chosen where the Shining One could not go, beyond the Black Precipices of Doul, a green land—"

"Ireland!" interrupted Larry, with conviction. "I knew it."

"Since then time upon time had passed," she went on, unheeding. "The people called this place Muria after their sunken land and soon they forgot where had been the passage the *Taithu* had sealed.

The moon king became the Voice of the Dweller and always with the Voice is a woman of the moon king's kin who is its priestess.

"And many have been the journeys upward of the Shining One, through the Moon Pool—returning with still others in its coils.

"And now again has it grown restless, longing for the wider spaces. It has spoken to Yolara and to Lugur even as it did to the dead *Taithu*, promising them dominion. And it has grown stronger, drawing to itself power to go far on the moon stream where it will. Thus was it able to seize your friend, Goodwin, and Olaf's wife and babe—and many more. Yolara and Lugur plan to open the way to earth face; to leave with their court and under the Shining One grasp the world!

"And this is the tale the Silent Ones bade me tell you—and it is done."

Breathlessly I had listened to the stupendous epic of a long-lost world. Now I found speech to voice the question ever with me, the thing that lay as close to my heart as did the welfare of Larry, indeed the whole object of my quest—the fact of Throckmartin and those who had passed with him into the Dweller's lair; yes, and of Olaf's wife, too.

"*Lakla*," I said, "the friend who drew me here and those he loved who went before him—can we not save them?"

"The Three say no, Goodwin." There was again in her eyes the pity with which she had looked upon Olaf. "The Shining One—*feeds*—upon the flame of life itself, setting in its place its own fires and its own will. Its slaves are only shells through which it gleams. Death, say the Three, is the best that can come to them; yet will that be a boon great indeed."

"But they have souls, mavourneen," Larry said to her. "And they're alive still—in a way. Anyhow, their souls have not gone from them."

I caught a hope from his words—sceptic though I am—holding that the existence of soul has never been proved by dependable laboratory methods—for they recalled to me that when I had seen Throckmartin, Edith had been close beside him.

"It was days after his wife was taken, that the Dweller seized Throckmartin," I cried. "How, if their wills, their life, were indeed gone, how did they find each other mid all that horde? How did they come together in the Dweller's lair?"

"I do not know," she answered, slowly. "You say they loved—and it is true that love is stronger even than death!"

"One thing I don't understand"—this was Larry again—"is why a girl like you keeps coming out of the black-haired crowd, so frequently and one might say, so regularly, *Lakla*. Aren't there ever any red-headed boys—and if there are, what becomes of them?"

"That, Larry, I cannot answer," she said, very frankly. "There was a pact of some kind; how made or by whom I know not. But for long the Murians feared the return of the *Taithu* and greatly they feared the Three. Even the Shining One feared those who had created it—for a time; and not even now is it eager to face them—that I know. Nor are Yolara and Lugur so *sure*. It may be that the Three

commanded it; but how or why I know not. I only know that it is true—for here am I and from where else would I have come?"

"From Ireland," said Larry O'Keefe, promptly. "And that's where you're going. For 'tis no place for a girl like you to have been brought up—Lakla; what with people like frogs, and a half-god three quarters devil, and red oceans, an' the only Irish things yourself and the Silent Ones up there, bless their hearts. It's no place for ye, and by the soul of St. Patrick, it's out of it soon ye'll be gettin'!"

Larry! Larry! If it had but been true—and I could see Lakla and you beside me now!

### CHAPTER XXXI

#### Larry and the Frog-Men

**L**ONG had been her tale in the telling, and too long, perhaps, have I been in the repeating—but not every day are the mists rolled away to reveal undreamed secrets of earth-youth. And I have set it down here, adding nothing, taking nothing from it; translating liberally, it is true, but constantly striving, while putting it into idea-forms and phraseology to be readily understood by my readers, to keep accurately to the spirit. And this, I must repeat, I have done throughout my narrative, wherever it has been necessary to record conversation rising with the Murians.

Rising, I found I was painfully stiff—as muscle-bound as though I had actually trudged many miles. Larry, imitating me, gave an involuntary groan.

"Faith, mavourneen," he said to Lakla, relapsing unconsciously into English, "your roads would never wear out shoe-leather, but they've got their kick, just the same!"

She understood our plight, if not his words; gave a soft little cry of mingled pity and self-reproach; forced us back upon the cushions.

"Oh, but I'm sorry!" mourned Lakla, leaning over us. "I had forgotten—for those new to it the way is a weary one, indeed!"

She ran to the doorway, whistled a clear high note down the passage. Through the hangings came two of the frog-men. She spoke to them rapidly. They crouched toward us, what certainly was meant for an amiable grin wrinkling the grotesque muzzles, baring the glistening rows of needle-teeth. And while I watched them with the fascination that they never lost for me, the monsters calmly swung one arm around our knees, lifted us up like babies—and as calmly started to walk away with us!

"Put me down! Put me down, I say!" The O'Keefe voice was both outraged and angry; squinting around I saw him struggling violently to get to his feet. The *Akka* only held him tighter, booming comfortingly, peering down into his flushed face inquiringly.

"But, Larry—darlin'!"—Lakla's tones were well, maternally surprised—"you're stiff and sore, and Kra can carry you quite easily."

"I won't be carried!" sputtered the O'Keefe. "Damn it, Goodwin, there are such things as the unities even here, an' for a lieutenant of the Royal Air Force to be picked up an' carted around like a—like a bundle of rags—it's not discipline! Put

me down, ye *omaahaun*, or I'll poke ye in the snout!" he shouted to his bearer—who only boomed gently, and stared at the handmaiden, plainly for further instructions.

"But, Larry—dear!"—Lakla was plainly distressed—"it will hurt you to walk; and I don't want you to be hurt, Larry—darlin'!"

"Holy shade of St. Patrick!" moaned Larry; again he made a mighty effort to tear himself from the frog-man's grip; gave up with a groan. "Listen, *alanana!*" he said plaintively. "When we get to Ireland, you and I, we won't have anybody to pick us up and carry us about every time we get a bit tired. And it's getting me in bad habits you are!"

"Oh, yes, we will, Larry!" cried the handmaiden, "because many, oh many, of my *Akka* will go with us!"

"Will you tell this—*boob!*—to put me down!" gritted the now thoroughly aroused O'Keefe. I couldn't help laughing; he glared at me.

"Bo-oo-ob!" exclaimed Lakla.

"Yes, bo-oo-ob!" said O'Keefe, "an' I have no desire to explain the word in my present position, light of my soul!"

The handmaiden sighed, plainly dejected. But she spoke again to the *Akka*, who gently lowered the O'Keefe to the floor.

"I don't understand," she said hopelessly. "If you want to walk, why, of course, you shall, Larry." She turned to me. "Do you?" she asked.

"I do not," I said firmly.

"Well, then," murmured Lakla, "go you, Larry and Goodwin, with Kra and Gulk, and let them minister to you. After, sleep a little—for not soon will Rador and Olaf return. And let me feel your lips before you go, Larry—darlin'!" She covered his eyes caressingly with her soft white palms; pushed him away.

"Now go," said Lakla, "and rest!"

Unashamed I lay back against the horny chest of Gulk; and with a smile noticed that Larry, even if he had rebelled at being carried, did not disdain the support of Kra's shining, black-scaled arm which, slipping around his waist, half-lifted him along.

They parted a hanging and dropped us softly down beside a little pool, sparkling with the clear water that had heretofore been brought us in the wide basins. Then they began to undress us. And at this point the O'Keefe gave up.

"Whatever they're going to do we can't stop 'em, Doc!" he moaned. "Anyway, I feel as though I've been pulled through a knot-hole, and I don't care—I don't care—as the song says."

When we were stripped we were lowered gently into the water. But not long did the *Akka* let us splash about the shallow basin. They lifted us out, and from jars began deftly to anoint and rub us with aromatic unguents.

I think that in all the medley of grotesque, of tragic, of baffling, strange and perilous experiences in that underground world none was more bizarre than this—valeting. I began to laugh, Larry joined me, and then Kra and Gulk joined in our merriment with deep batrachian cachinnations and grunts. Then, having finished apparelling us and still chuck-

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ling, the two touched our arms and led us out, into a room whose circular sides were ringed with soft divans. Still smiling, I sank at once into sleep.

**H**OW long I slumbered I do not know. A low and thunderous booming coming through the deep window slit, reverberated through the room and awakened me. Larry yawned; arose briskly.

"Sounds as though the bass drums of every jazz band in New York were serenading us!" he observed. Simultaneously we sprang to the window; peered through.

We were a little above the level of the bridge, and its full length was plain before us. Thousands upon thousands of the *Akka* were crowding upon it, and far away other hordes filled like a glittering thicket both sides of the cavern ledge's crescent strand. On black scale and orange scale the crimson light fell, picking them off in little flickering points.

Upon the platform from which sprang the smaller span over the abyss were Lakla, Olaf, and Rador; the handmaiden clearly acting as interpreter between them and the giant she had called Nak, the Frog King.

"Come on!" shouted Larry.

Out of the open portal we ran; over the World Heart Bridge—and straight into the group.

"Oh!" cried Lakla, "I didn't want you to wake up so soon Larry—darlin'!"

"See here, *mavourneen!*" Indignation thrilled in the Irishman's voice. "I'm not going to be done up with baby-ribbons and laid away in a cradle for safe-keeping while a fight is on; don't think it! Why didn't you call me?"

"You needed rest!" There was indomitable determination in the handmaiden's tones, the eternal maternal shining defiant from her eyes. "You were tired and you hurt! You shouldn't have got up!"

"Needed the rest!" groaned Larry. "Look here, Lakla, what do you think I am?"

"You're all I have," said that maiden firmly, "and I'm going to take care of you, Larry—darlin'! Don't you ever think anything else."

"Well, pulse of my heart, considering my delicate health and general fragility, would it hurt me, do you think, to be told what's going on?" he asked.

"Not at all, Larry!" answered the handmaiden serenely. "Yolara went through the Portal. She was very, *very* angry—"

"She was all the devil's woman that she is!" rumbled Olaf.

"Rador met the messenger," went on the Golden Girl calmly. "The *ladala* are ready to rise when Lugur and Yolara lead their hosts against us. They will strike at those left behind. And in the meantime we shall have disposed my *Akka* to meet Yolara's men. And on that disposal we must all take counsel, you, Larry, and Rador, Olaf and Goodwin and Nak, the ruler of the *Akka*."

"Did the messenger give any idea when Yolara expects to make her little call?" asked Larry.

"Yes," she answered. "They prepare, and we may expect them in—" She gave the equivalent of about thirty-six hours of our time.

"But, Lakla," I said, the doubt that I had long been holding finding voice, "should the Shining One

come—with its slaves—are the Three strong enough to cope with it?"

There was troubled doubt in her own eyes.

"I do not know," she said at last, frankly. "You have heard their story. What they promise is that they will help. I do not know—any more than do you, Goodwin!"

I looked up at the dome beneath which I knew the dread Trinity stared forth even down upon us. And despite the awe, the assurance, I had felt when I stood before them I, too, doubted.

"Well," said Larry, "you and I, uncle," he turned to Rador, "and Olaf here had better decide just what part of the battle we'll lead—"

"Lead!" the handmaiden was appalled. "You lead Larry? Why you are to stay with Goodwin and with me—up there, there we can watch."

"Heart's beloved" O'Keefe was stern indeed. "A thousand times I've looked Death straight in the face, peered into his eyes. Yes, and with ten thousand feet of space under me an' Boche shells tickling the ribs of the boat I was in. An' d'y'e think I'll sit now on the grand stand an' watch while a game like this is being pulled? Ye don't know your future husband, soul of my delight!"

And so we started toward the golden opening, squads of the frog-men following us soldierly and disappearing about the huge structure. Nor did we stop until we came to the handmaiden's boudoir. There we seated ourselves.

"Now," said Larry, "two things I want to know. First—how many can Yolara muster against us; second, how many of these *Akka* have we to meet them?"

Rador gave our equivalent for eighty thousand men as the force Yolara could muster without stripping her city. Against this force, it appeared, we could count, roughly, upon two hundred thousand of the *Akka*.

"And they're some fighters!" exclaimed Larry. "Hell, with odds like that what're you worrying about? It's over before it's begun."

"But, *Larree*," objected Rador to this, "you forget that the nobles will have the *Keth*—and other things; also that the soldiers have fought against the *Akka* before and will be shielded very well from their spears and clubs—and that their blades and javelins can bite through the scales of Nak's warriors. They have many things—"

"Uncle," interjected O'Keefe, "one thing they have is your nerve. Why, we're more than two to one. And take it from me—"

Without warning dropped the tragedy!

## CHAPTER XXXII

"Your Love; Your Lives; Your Souls!"

**L**AKLA had taken no part in the talk since we had reached her bower. She had seated herself close to the O'Keefe. Glancing at her I had seen steal over her face that brooding, listening look that was hers whenever in that mysterious communion with the Three. It vanished; swiftly she arose; interrupted the Irishman without ceremony.

"Larry, darlin'," said the handmaiden. "The Silent Ones summon us!"

"When do we go?" I asked; Larry's face grew bright with interest.

"The time is now," she said—and hesitated. "Larry dear, put your arms about me," she faltered, "for there is something cold that catches at my heart—and I am afraid."

At this exclamation she gathered herself together; gave a shaky little laugh.

"It's because I love you so that fear has power to plague me," she told him.

Without another word he bent and kissed her; in silence we passed on, his arm still about her girdled waist, golden head and black close together. Soon we stood before the crimson slab that was the door to the sanctuary of the Silent Ones. She poised uncertainly before it; then with a defiant arching of the proud little head that sent all the bronze-flecked curls flying, she pressed. It slipped aside and once more the opalescence gushed out, flooding all about us.

Dazzled as before, I followed through the lambent cascades pouring from the high, carved walls; paused, and my eyes clearing, looked up—straight into the faces of the Three. The angled orbs centred upon the handmaiden; softened as I had seen them do when first we had faced them. She smiled up; seemed to listen.

"Come closer," she commanded, "close to the feet of the Silent Ones."

We moved, pausing at the very base of the dais. The sparkling mists thinned; the great heads bent slightly over us; through the veils I caught a glimpse of huge columnar necks, enormous shoulders covered with draperies as of pale-blue fire.

I came back to attention with a start, for Lakla was answering a question only heard by her, and, answering it aloud, I perceived for our benefit; for whatever was the mode of communication between those whose handmaiden she was, and her, it was clearly independent of speech.

"He has been told," she said, "even as you commanded."

Did I see a shadow of pain fit across the flickering eyes? Wondering, I glanced at Lakla's face and there was a dawn of foreboding and bewilderment. For a little she held her listening attitude; then the gaze of the Three left her; focused upon the O'Keefe.

"Thus speak the Silent Ones—through Lakla, their handmaiden," the golden voice was like low trumpet notes. "At the threshold of doom is that world of yours above. Yea, even the doom, Goodwin, that ye dreamed and the shadow of which, looking into your mind they see, say the Three. For not upon earth and never upon earth can man find means to destroy the Shining One."

She listened again—and the foreboding deepened to an amazed fear.

"They say, the Silent Ones," she went on, "that they know not whether even they have power to destroy. Energies we know nothing of entered into its shaping and are part of it and still other energies it has gathered to itself"—she paused; a shadow of puzzlement crept into her voice—"and other energies still, forces that ye do know and symbolize

by certain names—hatred and pride and lust and many others which are forces real as that hidden in the *Keth*; and among them—fear, which weakens all those others—" Again she paused.

"But within it is nothing of that greatest of all, that which can make powerless all the evil others, that which we call—love," she ended softly.

"I'd like to be the one to put a little more *fear* in the beast," whispered Larry to me, grimly in our own English. The three weird heads bent, ever so slightly—and I gasped, and Larry grew a little white as Lakla nodded—

"They say, Larry," she said, "that there you touch one side of the heart of the matter—for it is through the way of fear the Silent Ones hope to strike at the very life of the Shining One!"

**T**H E visage Larry turned to me was eloquent of wonder; and mine reflected it—for what *really* were this Three to whom our minds were but open pages, so easily read? Not long could we conjecture; Lakla broke the little silence.

"This, they say, is what is to happen. First will come upon us Lugar and Yolara with all their host. Because of fear the Shining One will lurk behind within its lair; for despite all, the Dweller *does* dread the Three, and only them. With this host the Voice and the priestess will strive to conquer. And if they do, then will they be strong enough, too, to destroy us all. For if they take the abode they banish from the Dweller all fear and sound the end of the Three.

"Then will the Shining One be all free indeed; free to go out into the world, free to do there as it wills!

"But if they do not conquer—and the Shining One comes not to their aid, abandoning them even as it abandoned its own *Taithu*—then will the Three be loosed from a part of their doom, and they will go through the Portal, seek the Shining One beyond the Veil, and, piercing it through fear's opening, destroy it."

"That's quite clear," murmured the O'Keefe in my ear. "Weaken the morale—then smash. I've seen it happen a dozen times in Europe. While they've got their nerve there's not a thing you can do; get their nerve—and not a thing can they do. And yet in both cases they're the same men."

Lakla had been listening again. She turned, thrust out hands to Larry, a wild hope in her eyes—and yet a hope half shamed.

"They say," she cried, "that they give us choice. Remembering that your world doom hangs in the balance, we have choice—choice to stay and help fight Yolara's armies—and they say look not lightly on that help. Or choice to go—and if so be you choose the latter, then will they show another way that leads into your world!"

A flush had crept over the O'Keefe's face as she was speaking. He took her hands and looked long into the golden eyes; glancing up I saw the Trinity were watching them intently—imperturbably.

"What do you say, *mavourneen*?" asked Larry gently. The handmaiden hung her head; trembled.

"Your words shall be mine, O one I love," she whispered. "So going or staying, I am beside you."

"And you, Goodwin?" he turned to me. I shrugged my shoulders—after all I had no one to care.

"It's up to you, Larry," I remarked, deliberately choosing his own phraseology.

The O'Keefe straightened, squared his shoulders, gazed straight into the flame-flickering eyes.

"We stick!" he said briefly.

Shamefacedly I recall now that at the time I thought this colloquialism not only irreverent, but in somewhat bad taste. I am glad to say I was alone in that bit of weakness. The face that Lakla turned to Larry was radiant with love, and although the shamed hope had vanished from the sweet eyes, they were shining with adoring pride. And the marble visages of the Three softened, and the little flames died down.

"Wait," said Lakla, "there is one other thing they say we must answer before they will hold us to that promise—wait—"

She listened, and then her face grew white—white as those of the Three themselves; the glorious eyes widened, stark terror filling them; the whole lithe body of her shook like a reed in the wind.

"Not that!" she cried out to the Three. "Oh, not that! Not Larry—let me go even as you will—but not him!" She threw up frantic hands to the woman-being of the Trinity. "Let me bear it alone," she wailed. "Alone—mother! Mother!"

The Three bent their heads toward her, their faces pitiful, and from the eyes of the woman One rolled—tears! Larry leaped to Lakla's side.

"Mavourneen!" he cried. "Sweetheart, what have they said to you?"

He glared up at the Silent Ones, his hand twitching toward the high-hung pistol holster.

The handmaiden swung to him; threw white arms around his neck; held her head upon his heart until her sobbing ceased.

"This they—say—the Silent Ones," she gasped and then all the courage of her came back. "O heart of mine!" she whispered to Larry, gazing deep into his eyes, his anxious face cupped between her white palms. "This they say that should the Shining One come to succor Yolara and Lugar, should it conquer its fear—and—do this—then is there but one way left to destroy it—and to save your world."

She swayed; he gripped her tightly.

"But one way—you and I must go—together—into its embrace! Yea, we must pass within it—loving each other, loving the world, realizing to the full all that we sacrifice and sacrificing all, our love, our lives, perhaps even that you call soul, O loved one; must give ourselves *all* to the Shining One—gladly, freely, our love for each other flaming high within us—that this curse shall pass away! For if we do this, pledge the Three, then shall that power of love we carry into it weaken for a time all that evil which the Shining One has become—and in that time the Three can strike and slay!"

THE blood rushed to my heart; scientist that I am, essentially, my reason rejected any such solution as this of the activities of the Dweller. Was it not, the thought flashed, a propitiation by the Three out of their own weakness—and as it

flashed I looked up to see their eyes, full of sorrow, on mine—and knew they read the thought. Then into the whirling vortex of my mind came steady reflections—of history changed by the power of hate, of passion, of ambition, and most of all, by love. Was there not actual dynamic energy in these things—was there not a Son of Man who hung upon a cross on Calvary?

"Dear love o' mine," said the O'Keefe quietly, "is it in your heart to say *yes* to this?"

"Larry," she spoke low, "what is in your heart is in mine but I did so want to go with you, to live with you—to—to bear you children, Larry—and to see the sun."

My eyes were wet; dimly through them I saw his gaze on me.

"If the world is at stake," he whispered, "why of course there's only one thing to do. God knows I never was afraid when I was fighting up there—and many a better man than me has gone West with shell and bullet for the same idea; but these things aren't shell and bullet—but I hadn't Lakla then—and it's the damned *doubt* I have behind it all."

He turned to the Three—and did I in their poise sense a rigidity, an anxiety that sat upon them as alienly as would divinity upon men?

"Tell me this, Silent Ones," he cried. "If we do this, Lakla and I, is it *sure* you are that you can slay the—Thing, and save my world? Is it *sure* you are?"

For the first and last time, I heard the voice of the Silent Ones. It was the man-being at the right who spoke.

"We are *sure*," the tones rolled out like deepest organ notes, shaking, vibrating, assailing the ears as strangely as their appearance struck the eyes. Another moment the O'Keefe stared at them. Once more he squared his shoulders; lifted Lakla's chin and smiled into her eyes.

"We stick!" he said again, nodding to the Three.

Over the visages of the Trinity fell benignity that was—awesome; the tiny flames in the jet orbs vanished, leaving them wells in which brimmed serenity, hope—an extraordinary joyfulness. The woman sat upright, tender gaze fixed upon the man and girl. Her great shoulders raised as though she had lifted her arms and had drawn to her those others. The three faces pressed together for a fleeting moment; raised again. The woman bent forward—and as she did so, Lakla and Larry, as though drawn by some outer force, were swept upon the dais.

Out from the sparkling mist stretched two hands, enormously long, six-fingered, thumbless, a faint traceery of golden scales upon their white backs, utterly unhuman and still in some strange way beautiful, radiating power and—all womanly!

They stretched forth; they touched the bent heads of Lakla and the O'Keefe; caressed them, drew them together, softly stroked them—lovingly, with more than a touch of benediction. And withdrew!

The sparkling mists rolled up once more, hiding the Silent Ones. As silently as once before we had gone we passed out of the place of light, beyond the crimson stone, back to the handmaiden's chamber.

Only one time on all our way did Larry speak. "Cheer up, darlin', he said to her, "it's a long way yet before the finish. An' are you thinking that Lugur and Yolara are going to pull this thing off? Are you?"

The handmaiden only looked at him, eyes love and sorrow filled.

"They are!" said Larry. "They are! Like hell they are!"

### CHAPTER XXXIII

#### The Meeting of Titans

**I**T is not my intention, nor is it possible no matter how interesting to me, to set down *ad seriatim* the happenings of the next twelve hours. But a few will not be denied recital.

O'Keefe regained cheerfulness.

"After all, Doc," he said to me, "It's a beautiful scrap we're going to have. At the worst the worst is no more than the leprechaun warned about. I would have told the Taitha Dé about the banshee raid he promised me; but I was a bit taken off my feet at the time. 'The old girl an' all the clan'll be along,' said the little green man, an' I bet the Three will be damned glad of it, take it from me."

Lakla, shining-eyed and half fearful too:

"I have other tidings that I am afraid will please you little, Larry—darlin'. The Silent Ones say that you must not go into battle yourself. You must stay here with me, and with Goodwin—for if—if—the Shining One does come, then must we be here to meet it. And you might not be, you know, Larry, if you fight," she said, looking shyly up at him from under the long lashes.

The O'Keefe jaw dropped.

"That's about the hardest yet," he answered slowly. "Still—I see their point; the lamb corralled for the altar has no right to stray out among the lions," he added, grimly. "Don't worry, sweet," he told her. "As long as I've sat in the game I'll stick to the rules."

Olaf took fierce joy in the coming fray.

"The Norns spin close to the end of this web," he rumbled. "Ja! And the threads of Lugur and the Heke woman are between their fingers for the breaking! Thor will be with me, and I have fashloned me a hammer in glory of Thor." In his hand was an enormous mace of black metal, fully five feet long, crowned with a massive head.

I pass to the twelve hours' closing.

At the end of the *coria* road where the giant fern-land met the edge of the cavern's ruby floor, hundreds of the *Akka* were stationed in ambush, armed with their spears tipped with the rotting death and their nail-studded, metal-headed clubs. These were to attack when the Murians debouched from the *coria*. We had little hope of doing more here than effect some attrition of Yolara's hosts, for at this place the captains of the Shining One could wield the *Keth* and their other uncanny weapons freely. We had learned, too, that every forge and artisan had been put to work to make an armor von Hetzdroph had devised to withstand the natural battle equipment of the frog-people—and

both Larry and I had a disquieting faith in the German's ingenuity.

At any rate the numbers against us would be lessened.

Next, under the direction of the frog-king, levies commanded by subsidiary chieftains had completed rows of rough walls along the probable route of the Murians through the cavern. These afforded the *Akka* a fair protection behind which they could hurl their darts and spears—curiously enough they had never developed the bow as a weapon.

At the opening of the cavern a strong barricade stretched almost to the two ends of the crescent strand; almost, I say, because there had not been time to build it entirely across the mouth.

And from edge to edge of the Titanic bridge, from where it sprang outward at the shore of the Crimson Sea to a hundred feet away from the golden door of the abode, barrier after barrier was piled.

Behind the wall defending the mouth of the cavern, waited other thousands of the *Akka*. At each end of the unfinished barricade they were mustered thickly, and at right and left of the crescent where their forests began, more legions were assembled to make way up to the ledge as opportunity offered.

Rank upon rank they manned the bridge barriers; they swarmed over the pinnacles and in the hollows of the island's ragged outer lip; the domed castle was hive of them, if I may mix my metaphors—and the rocks and gardens that surrounded the abode glittered with them.

"Now," said the handmaiden, "there's nothing else we can do—save wait."

She led us out through her bower and up the little path that ran to the embrasure.

Through the quiet came a sound, a sighing, a half-mournful whispering that beat about us and fled away.

"They come!" cried Lakla, the light of battle in her eyes. Larry drew her to him, raised her in his arms, kissed her.

"A woman!" acclaimed the O'Keefe. "A real woman—and mine!"

**W**ITH the cry of the Portal there was movement among the *Akka*, the glint of moving spears, flash of metal-tipped clubs, rattle of horny spurs, rumblings of battle-cries.

And we waited—waited it seemed interminably, gaze fastened upon the low wall across the cavern mouth. Suddenly I remembered the crystal through which I had peered when the hidden assassins had crept upon us. Mentioning it to Lakla, she gave a little cry of vexation, a command to her attendant; and not long that faithful if unusual lady had returned with a tray of the glasses. Raising mine, I saw the lines furthest away leap into sudden activity. Spurred warrior after warrior leaped upon the barricade and over it. Flashes of intense green light, mingled with gleams like lightning strokes of concentrated moon rays, sprang from behind the wall—sprang and struck and burned upon the scales of the batrachians.

"They're coming, Larry darlin'," whispered Lakla. At the far ends of the crescent a terrific milling had begun. Here it was plain the Akka were holding. Faintly, for the distance was great, I could see fresh force upon force rush up and take the places of those who had fallen.

Over each of these ends, and along the whole line of the barricade a mist of dancing, diamonded atoms began to rise; sparkling, coruscating points of diamond dust that darted and danced.

What had once been Lakla's guardians—dancing now in the nothingness!

"God, but it's hard to stay here like this!" groaned the O'Keefe; Olaf's teeth were bared, the lips drawn back in such a fighting grin as his ancestors berserk on their raven ships must have borne; Rador was livid with rage; the handmaiden's nostrils flaring wide, all her wrathful soul in her eyes.

Suddenly, while we looked, the rocky wall which the Akka had built at the cavern mouth—was not! It vanished, as though an unseen, unbelievably gigantic hand had with the lightning's speed swept it away. And with it vanished, too, long lines of the great amphibians close behind it.

Then down upon the ledge, dropping into the Crimson Sea, sending up geysers of ruby spray, dashing on the bridge, crushing the frog-men, fell a shower of stone, mingled with distorted shapes and fragments whose scales still flashed meteoric as they hurtled from above.

"That which makes things fall upward," hissed Olaf. "That which I saw in the garden of Lugur!"

The fiendish agency of destruction which von Hetzendorf had revealed to Larry; the force that cut off gravitation and sent all things within its range racing outward into space!

And now over the débris upon the ledge, striking with long sword and daggers, here and there a captain flashing the green ray, moving on in ordered squares, came the soldiers of the Shining One. Nearer and nearer the verge of the ledge they pushed Nak's warriors. Leaping upon the dwarfs, smiting them with spear and club, with teeth and spur, the Akka fought like devils. Quivering under the ray, they leaped and dragged down and slew.

Now there was but one long line of the frog-men at the very edge of the cliff.

And ever the clouds of dancing, diamonded atoms grew thicker over them all!

That last thin line of the Akka was going; yet they fought to the last, and none toppled over the lip without at least one of the armored Murians in his arms.

My gaze dropped to the foot of the cliffs. Stretched along their length was a wide ribbon of beauty—a shimmering multitude of gleaming, pulsing, prismatic moons; glowing, glowing ever brighter, ever more wondrous—the gigantic Medusæ globes feasting on dwarf and frog-man alike!

Across the waters, faintly, came a triumphant shouting from Lugur's and Yolara's men!

Was the ruddy light of the place lessening, growing paler, changing to a faint rose? There was an exclamation from Larry; something like hope relaxed the drawn muscles of his face. He pointed

to the aureate dome wherein sat the Three—and then I saw!

Out of it, through the long transverse slit through which the Silent Ones kept their watch on cavern, bridge, and abyss, a torrent of the opalescent light was pouring. It cascaded like a waterfall, and as it flowed it spread whirling out, in columns and eddies, clouds and wisps of misty, curdled coruscations. It hung like a veil over all the island, filtering everywhere, driving back the crimson light as though possessed of impenetrable substance—and still it cast not the faintest shadowing upon our vision.

"Good God!" breathed Larry. "Look!"

The radiance was marching—*marching*—down the colossal bridge. It moved swiftly, in some unthinkable way *intelligently*. It swathed the Akka, and closer, ever closer it swept toward the approach upon which Yolars' men had now gained foothold.

From their ranks came flash after flash of the green ray—aimed at the abode! But as the light sped and struck the opalescence it was blotted out! The shimmering mists seemed to enfold, to dissipate it.

Lakla drew a deep breath.

"The Silent Ones forgive me for doubting them," she whispered; and again hope blossomed on her face even as it did on Larry's.

The frog-men were gaining. Clothed in the armor of that mist, they pressed back from the bridge-head the invaders. There was another prodigious movement at the end of the crescent, and racing up, pressing against the dwarfs, came other legions of Nak's warriors. And re-enforcing those out on the prodigious arch, the frog-men stationed in the gardens below us poured back to the castle and out through the open Portal.

"They're licked!" shouted Larry. "They're——"

**S**O quickly I could not follow the movement his automatic leaped to his hand—spoke, once and again and again. Rador leaped to the head of the little path, sword in hand; Olaf, shouting and whirling his mace, followed. I strove to get my own gun quickly.

For up that path were running two-score of Lugur's men, while from below Lugur's own voice roared.

"Quick! Slay not the handmaiden or her lover! Carry them down. Quick! But slay the others!"

The handmaiden raced toward Larry, stopped, whistled shrilly—again and again. Larry's pistol was empty, but as the dwarfs rushed upon him I dropped two of them with mine. It jammed—I could not use it; I sprang to his side. Rador was down, struggling in a heap of Lugur's men. Olaf, a Viking of old, was whirling his great hammer, and striking, striking through armor, flesh, and bone.

Larry was down, Lakla flew to him. But the Norseman, now streaming blood from a dozen wounds, caught a glimpse of her coming, turned, thrust out a mighty hand, sent her reeling back, and then with his hammer cracked the skulls of those trying to drag the O'Keefe down the path.

A cry from Lakla—the dwarfs had seized her,

had lifted her despite her struggles, were carrying her away. One I dropped with the butt of my useless pistol, and then went down myself under the rush of another.

Through the clamor I heard a booming of the *Akka*, closer, closer; then through it the bellow of Lugur. I made a mighty effort, swung a hand up, and sunk my fingers in the throat of the soldier striving to kill me. Writhing over him, my fingers touched a poniard; I thrust it deep, staggered to my feet.

The O'Keefe, shielding Lakla, was battling with a long sword against a half dozen of the soldiers. I started toward him, was struck, and under the impact hurled to the ground. Dizzily I raised myself—and leaning upon my elbow, stared and moved no more. For the dwarfs lay dead, and Larry, holding Lakla tightly, was staring even as I, and ranged at the head of the path were the *Akka*, whose booming advance in obedience to the handmaiden's call I had heard.

And at what we all stared was Olaf, crimson with his wounds, and Lugur, in blood-red armor, locked in each other's grip, struggling, smiting, tearing, kicking, and swaying about the little space before the embrasure. I crawled over toward the O'Keefe. He raised his pistol, dropped it.

"Can't hit him without hitting Olaf," he whispered. Lakla signalled the frog-men; they advanced toward the two—but Olaf saw them, broke the red dwarf's hold, sent Lugur reeling a dozen feet away.

"No!" shouted the Norseman, the ice of his pale-blue eyes glinting like frozen flames, blood streaming down his face and dripping from his hands.

"No! Lugur is mine! None but me slays him! Ho, you Lugur—" and cursed him and Yolara and the Dweller hideously—I cannot set those curses down here.

They spurred Lugur. Mad now as the Norseman, the red dwarf sprang. Olaf struck a blow that would have killed an ordinary man, but Lugur only grunted, swept in, and seized him about the waist; one mighty arm began to creep up toward Huldricksson's throat.

"Ware, Olaf!" cried O'Keefe; but Olaf did not answer. He waited until the red dwarf's hand was close to his shoulder; and then, with an incredibly rapid movement—once before had I seen something like it in a wrestling match between Papuans—he had twisted Lugur around; twisted him so that Olaf's right arm lay across the tremendous breast, the left behind the neck, and Olaf's left leg held the Voice's armored thighs viselike against his right knee while over that knee lay the small of the red dwarf's back.

For a second or two the Norseman looked down upon his enemy, motionless in that paralyzing grip. And then, slowly—he began to break him!

Lakla gave a little cry; made a motion toward the two. But Larry drew her head down against his breast, hiding her eyes; then fastened his own upon the pair, white-faced, stern.

Slowly, ever so slowly, proceeded Olaf. Twice Lugur moaned. At the end he screamed—horribly.

There was a cracking sound, as of a stout stick snapped.

Huldricksson stooped, silently. He picked up the limp body of the Voice, not yet dead, for the eyes rolled, the lips strove to speak; lifted it, walked to the parapet, swung it twice over his head, and cast it down to the red waters!

#### CHAPTER XXXIV

##### The Coming of the Shining One

THE Norseman turned toward us. There was now no madness in his eyes; only a great weariness. And there was peace on the once tortured face.

"Helma," he whispered, "I go a little before! Soon you will come to me—to me and the Yndling who will await you—Helma, *meine liebe!*"

Blood gushed from his mouth; he swayed, fell. And thus died Olaf Huldricksson.

We looked down upon him; nor did Lakla, nor Larry, nor I try to hide our tears. And as we stood the *Akka* brought to us that other mighty fighter, Rador! but in him there was life, and we attended to him there as best we could.

Then Lakla spoke.

"We will bear him into the castle where we may give him greater care," she said. "For, lo! the hosts of Yolara have been beaten back; and on the bridge comes Nak with tidings."

We looked over the parapet. It was even as she had said. Neither on ledge nor bridge was there trace of living men of Muria; only heaps of slain that lay everywhere—and thick against the cavern mouth still danced the flashing atoms of those the green ray had destroyed.

"Over!" exclaimed Larry incredulously. "We live then—heart of mine!"

"The Silent Ones recall their veils," she said, pointing to the dome. Back through the slit opening the radiance was streaming; withdrawing from sea and island; marching back over the bridge with that same ordered, intelligent motion. Behind it the red light pressed, like skirmishers on the heels of a retreating army.

"And yet—" faltered the handmaiden as we passed into her chamber, and doubtful were the eyes she turned upon the O'Keefe.

"I don't believe," he said, "there's a kick left in them—"

What was that sound beating into the chamber faintly, so faintly? My heart gave a great throb and seemed to stop for an eternity. What was it—coming nearer, ever nearer? Now Lakla and O'Keefe heard it, life ebbing from lips and cheeks.

Nearer, nearer—a music as of myriads of tiny crystal bells, tinkling, tinkling—a storm of pizzicati upon violins of glass! Nearer, nearer—not sweetly now, nor luring; no—raging, wrathful, sinister beyond words; sweeping on; nearer—

The Dweller! The Shining One!

We leaped to the narrow window; peered out, aghast. The bell notes swept through and about us, a hurricane. The crescent strand was once more a ferment. Back, back were the *Akka* being swept, as though by brooms, tottering on the edge

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of the ledge, falling into the waters. Swiftly they were finished; and where they had fought was an eddying throng clothed in tatters or naked, swaying, drifting, arms tossing—like marionettes of Satan.

The dead-alive! The slaves of the Dweller!

They swayed and tossed, and then, like water racing through an opened dam, they swept upon the bridge-head. On and on they pushed, like the bore of a mighty tide. The frog-men strove against them, clubbing, spearing, tearing them. But even those worst smitten seemed not to fall. On they pushed, driving forward, irresistible—a battering ram of flesh and bone. They clove the masses of the *Akka*, pressing them to the sides of the bridge and over. Through the open gates they forced them—for there was no room for the frog-men to stand against that implacable tide.

Then those of the *Akka* who were left turned their backs and ran. We heard the clang of the golden wings of the portal, and none too soon to keep out the first of the Dweller's dreadful hordes.

Now upon the cavern ledge and over the whole length of the bridge there were none but the dead-alive, men and women, black-polled *ladala*, sloe-eyed Malays, slant-eyed Chinese, men of every race that sailed the seas—milling, turning, swaying, like leaves caught in a sluggish current.

The bell notes became sharper, more insistent. At the cavern mouth a radiance began to grow—a gleaming from which the atoms of diamond dust seemed to try to flee. As the radiance grew and the crystal notes rang nearer, every head of that hideous multitude turned swiftly, slowly toward the right, looking toward the far bridge end; their eyes fixed and glaring; every face an inhuman mask of rapture and of horror!"

A movement shook them. Those in the centre began to stream back, faster and ever faster, leaving motionless deep ranks on each side. Back they flowed until from golden doors to cavern mouth a wide lane stretched, walled on each side by the dead-alive.

The far radiance became brighter; it gathered itself at the end of the dreadful lane; it was shot with sparklings and with pulsings of polychromatic light. The crystal storm was intolerable, piercing the ears with countless tiny lances; brighter still the radiance—

From the cavern swirled the Shining One!

THE Dweller paused, seemed to scan the island of the Silent Ones half doubtfully; then slowly, stately, it drifted out upon the bridge. Closer it drew; behind it glided Yolara at the head of a company of her dwarfs, and at her side was the hag of the Council whose face was the withered, shat-tered echo of her own.

Slower grew the Dweller's pace as it drew nearer. Did I sense in it a doubt, an uncertainty? The crystal-tongued, unseen choristers that accompanied it subtly seemed to reflect the doubt; their notes were not sure, no longer insistent; rather was there in them an undertone of hesitancy, of warning! Yet on came the Shining One until it stood plain beneath us, searching with those eyes

that thrust from and withdrew into unknown spheres, the golden gateway, the cliff face, the castle's rounded bulk—and more intently than any of these, the dome wherein sat the Three.

Behind it each face of the dead-alive turned toward it, and those beside it throbbed and gleamed with its luminescence.

Yolara crept close, just beyond the reach of its spirals. She murmured—and the Dweller bent toward her, its seven globes steady in their shining mists, as though listening. It drew erect once more, resumed its doubtful scrutiny. Yolara's face darkened; she turned abruptly, spoke to a captain of her guards. A dwarf raced back between the palisades of dead-alive.

Now the priestess cried out, her voice ringing like a silver clarion.

"Ye are done, ye Three! The Shining One stands at your door, demanding entrance. Your beasts are slain and your power is gone. Who are ye, says the Shining One, to deny it entrance to the place of its birth?"

"Ye do not answer," she cried again, "yet know we that ye hear! The Shining One offers these terms: Send forth your handmaiden and that lying stranger she stole; send them forth to us—and perhaps ye may live. But if ye send them not forth, then shall ye too die—and soon!"

We waited, silent, even as did Yolara—and again there was no answer from the Three.

The priestess laughed; the blue eyes flashed.

"It is ended!" she cried. "If you will not open, needs must we open for you!"

Over the bridge was marching a long double file of the dwarfs. They bore a smoothed and handled tree-trunk whose head was knobbed with a huge ball of metal. Past the priestess, past the Shining One, they carried it; fifty of them to each side of the ram; and behind them stepped—von Hetzendorp!

Larry awoke to life.

"Now, thank God," he rasped, "I can get the German, anyway!"

He drew his pistol, took careful aim. Even as he pressed the trigger there rang through the abode a tremendous clanging. The ram was battering at the gates. O'Keefe's bullet went wild. The German must have heard the shot; perhaps the missile was closer than we knew. He made a swift leap behind the guards; was lost to sight.

Once more the thunderous clanging rang through the castle.

Lakla drew herself erect; down upon her dropped the listening aloofness. Gravely she bowed her head.

"It is time, O love of mine." She turned to O'Keefe. "The Silent Ones say that the way of fear is closed, but the way of love is open. They call upon us to redeem our promise!"

For a hundred heart-beats they clung to each other, breast to breast and lip to lip. Below, the clangor was increasing, the great trunk swinging harder and faster upon the metal gates. Now Lakla gently loosed the arms of the O'Keefe, and for another instant those two looked into each

other's souls. The handmaiden smiled tremulously.

"I would it might have been otherwise, Larry darlin'," she whispered. "But at least—we pass together, dearest of mine!"

She leaped to the window.

"Yolara!" the golden voice rang out sweetly. The clanging ceased. "Draw back your men. We open the Portal and come forth to you and the Shining One—Larry and I."

The priestess's silver chimes of laughter rang out, cruel, mocking.

"Come then, and quickly," she jeered. "For surely both the Shining One and I yearn for you!" Her malice-laden laughter chimed high once more. "Keep us not lonely long!" the priestess mocked.

LARRY drew a deep breath, stretched both hands out to me.

"It's good-by, I guess, Doc." His voice was strained. "Good-by and good luck, old boy. If you get out, and you will, let the old *Dolphin* know I'm gone. And carry on, pal—and always remember the O'Keefe loved you like a brother."

I squeezed his hand desperately. Then out of my balance-shaking woe a strange comfort was born.

"Maybe it's not good-by, Larry!" I cried. "The banshee has not cried!"

A flash of hope passed over his face; the old reckless grin shone forth.

"It's so!" he said. "By the Lord, it's so!"

Then Lakla bent toward me, and for the second time—kissed me.

"Come!" she said to Larry. Hand in hand they moved away, into the corridor that led to the door outside of which waited the Shining One and its priestess.

And unseen by them, wrapped as they were within their love and sacrifice, I crept softly behind. For I had determined that if enter the Dweller's embrace they must, they should not go alone.

They paused before the Golden Portals; the handmaiden pressed its opening lever; the massive leaves rolled back.

Heads high, proudly, serenely, they passed through and out upon the hither span. I followed.

On each side of us stood the Dweller's slaves, faces turned rigidly toward their master. A hundred feet away the Shining One pulsed and spiralled in its evilly glorious lambency of sparkling plumes.

Unhesitating, always with that same high serenity, Lakla and the O'Keefe, hands clasped like little children, drew closer to that wondrous shape. I could not see their faces, but I saw awe fall upon those of the watching dwarfs, and into the burning eyes of Yolara crept a doubt. Closer they drew to the Dweller, and closer, I following them step by step. The Shining One's whirling lessened; its tinklings were faint, almost stilled. It seemed to watch them apprehensively. A silence fell upon us all, a thick silence, brooding, ominous, palpable. Now the pair were face to face with the child of

the Three—so near that with one of its misty tentacles it could have enfolded them.

And the Shining One drew back!

Yes, drew back—and back with it stepped Yolara, the doubt in her eyes deepening. Onward paced the handmaiden and the O'Keefe—and step by step, as they advanced, the Dweller withdrew; its bell notes chiming out, puzzled, questioning—half fearful!

And back it drew, and back until it had reached the very centre of that platform over the abyss in whose depths pulsed the green fires of earth heart. And there Yolara gripped herself; the hell that seethed within her soul leaped out of her eyes; a cry, a shriek of rage, tore from her lips.

As at a signal, the Shining One flamed high; its spirals and eddying mists swirled madly, the pulsing core of it blazed radiance. A score of coruscating tentacles swept straight upon the pair who stood intrepid, unresisting awaiting its embrace. And upon me, lurking behind them.

Through me swept a mighty exaltation. It was the end then—and I was to meet it with them.

Something drew us back, back with an incredible swiftness, and yet as gently as a summer breeze sweeps a bit of thistledown! Drew us back from those darting misty arms even as they were a hair-breadth from us! I heard the Dweller's hell notes burst out ragingly; I heard Yolara scream.

What was that?

Between the three of us and them was a ring of curdled moon flames, swirling about the Shining One and its priestess, pressing in upon them; enfolding them!

And within it I glimpsed the faces of the Three—implacable, sorrowful, filled with a supernal power!

Sparks and flashes of white flame darted from the ring, penetrating the radiant swathings of the Dweller, striking through its pulsing nucleus, piercing its seven crowning orbs.

Now the Shining One's radiance began to dim, the seven orbs to dull; the tiny sparkling filaments that ran from them down into the Dweller's body snapped, vanished! Through the battling nebulosities Yolara's face swam forth—horror-filled, distorted, inhuman!

The ranks of the dead-alive quivered, moved, writhed, as though each felt the torment of the Thing that had enslaved them. The radiance that the Three wielded grew more intense, thicker, seemed to expand. Within it, suddenly, were scores of flaming triangles—scores of eyes like those of the Silent Ones!

And the Shining One's seven little moons of amber, of silver, of blue and amethyst and green, of rose and white, split, shattered, were gone! Abruptly the tortured tortured crystal chiming ceased.

Dulled, all its soul-shaking beauty dead, blotched and shadowed squalidly, its gleaming plumes tarnished, its dancing spirals stripped from it, that which had been the Shining One wrapped itself about Yolara—wrapped and drew her into itself; writhed, swayed, and hurled itself over the edge of the bridge—down, down into the green fires of the unfathomable abyss—with its priestess still enfolded in its coils!

From the dwarfs who had watched that terror came screams of panic fear. They turned and ran, racing frantically over the bridge toward the cavern mouth.

The serried ranks of the dead-alive trembled, shook. Then from their faces fled the horror of wedded ecstasy and anguish. Peace, utter peace, followed in its wake.

And as fields of wheat are bent and fall beneath the wind, they fell. No longer dead-alive, now all of the blessed dead, freed from their dreadful slavery!

Abruptly from the sparkling mists the cloud of eyes was gone. Faintly revealed in them were only the heads of the Silent Ones. And they drew before us; were before us! No flames now in their ebon eyes—for the flickering fires were quenched in great tears, streaming down the marble white faces. They bent toward us, over us; their radiance enfolded us. My eyes darkened. I could not see. I felt a tender hand upon my head—and panic and frozen dread and nightmare web that held me fled.

Then they, too, were gone.

Upon Larry's breast the handmaiden was sobbing—sobbing out her heart—but this time with the joy of one who is swept up from the very threshold of hell into paradise.

#### CHAPTER XXXV

##### Von Hetzdorp Strikes!

**M**Y heart, Larry—" It was the handmaiden's murmur. "My heart feels like a bird that is flying from a nest of sorrow."

We were pacing down the length of the bridge, guards of the *Akka* beside us, others following with those companies of the *ladda* that had rushed to aid us; in front of us the bandaged Rador swung gently within a litter; beside him, in another, lay Nak, the frog-king—much less of him than there had been before the battle began, but living.

Hours had passed since the terror I have just related. My first task had been to search for Throckmartin and his wife among the fallen multitudes strewn thick as autumn leaves along the flying arch of stone, over the cavern ledge, and back, back as far as the eye could reach.

At last, Lakla and Larry helping, we found them. They lay close to the bridge-end, not parted—locked tight in each other's arms, pallid face to face, her hair streaming over his breast! As though when that unearthly life the Dweller had set within them passed away, their own had come back for one fleeting instant—and they had known each other, and clasped before kindly death had taken them.

"Love is stronger than all things." The handmaiden was weeping softly. "Love never left them. Love was stronger than the Shining One. And when its evil fled, love went with them—wherever souls go."

Of Stanton and Thora there was no trace; nor, after our discovery of those other two, did I care

to look more. They were dead—and they were free.

We buried Throckmartin and Edith beside Olaf in Lakla's bower. But before the body of my old friend was placed within the grave I gave it a careful and sorrowful examination. The skin was firm and smooth, but cold; not the cold of death, but with a chill that set my touching fingers tingling unpleasantly. The body was bloodless; the course of veins and arteries marked by faintly indented white furrows, as though their walls had long collapsed. Lips, mouth, even the tongue, was paper white. There was no sign of dissolution as we know it; no shadow or stain upon the marble surface. Whatever the force that, streaming from the Dweller or impregnating its lair, had energized the dead-alive, it was barrier against putrescence of any kind; that at least was certain.

But it was not barrier against the poison of the Meduse, for, our sad task done, and looking down upon the waters, I saw the pale forms of the Dweller's hordes dissolving, vanishing into the shifting glories of the gigantic moons sailing down upon them from every quarter of the Sea of Crimson.

While the frog-men, those late levies from the farthest forests, were clearing bridge and ledge of cavern of the litter of the dead, we listened to a leader of the *ladda*. They had risen, even as the messenger had promised Rador. Fierce had been the struggle in the gardened city by the silver waters with those Lugar and Yolara had left behind to garrison it. Deadly had been the slaughter of the fair-haired, reaping the harvest of hatred they had been sowing so long. Not without a pang of regret did I think of the beautiful, gaily malicious elfin women destroyed—evil though they may have been.

The ancient city of Lara was a charnel. Of all the rulers not twoscore had escaped, and these into regions of peril which to describe as sanctuary would be mockery. Nor had the *ladda* fared so well. Of all the men and women, for women as well as men had taken their part in the swift war, not more than a tenth remained alive.

And the dancing motes of light in the silver air were thick, thick—they whispered.

They told us of the Shining One rushing through the Veil, comet like, its hosts streaming behind it, raging with it, in ranks that seemed interminable!

Of the massacre of the priests and priestesses in the Cyclopean temple; of the flashing forth of the summoning lights by unseen hands—followed by the tearing of the rainbow curtain, by colossal shattering of the radiant cliffs; the vanishing behind their débris of all trace of entrance to the haunted place wherein the hordes of the Shining One had slaved—the sealing of the lair.

**T**HEN, when the tempest of hate had ended, they had lifted the Shadow, passed through the Portal, met and slaughtered the fleeing remnants of Yolara's men—only to find the tempest stilled here, too.

But of von Hetzdorp they had seen nothing!

Had the German escaped, I wondered, or was he lying out there among the dead?

But now the *ladala* were calling upon Lakla to come with them to govern them.

"I don't want to, Larry darlin'," she told him. "I want to go out with you to Ireland. But for a time—I think the Three would have us remain and set that place in order."

The O'Keefe was bothered about something else than the government of Muria.

"If they've killed off all the priests, who's to marry us, heart of mine?" he worried. "None of those Siya and Siyana rites, no matter what," he added hastily.

"Marry!" cried the handmaiden incredulously. "Marry us? Why, Larry dear, we *are* married!"

The O'Keefe's astonishment was complete; his jaw dropped; collapse seemed imminent.

"We *are*?" he gasped. "When?" he stammered fatuously.

"Why, when the Mother drew us together before her; when she put her hands on our heads after we had made the promise! Didn't you understand that?" asked the handmaiden wonderingly.

He looked at her, into the purity of the clear golden eyes, into the purity of the soul that gazed out of them; all his own great love transfiguring his keen face.

"An' is that enough for you, *mavourneen*?" he whispered humbly.

"Enough?" The handmaiden's puzzlement was complete, profound. "Enough! Larry darlin', what *more could we ask*?"

He drew a deep breath, clasped her close.

"Kiss the bride, Doc!" cried the O'Keefe. And for the third and, soul's sorrow! the last time, Lakla dimpling and blushing, I thrilled to the touch of her soft, sweet lips.

Quickly were our preparations for departure made. Rador, conscious, his immense vitality conquering fast his wounds, was to be borne ahead of us. And, when all was done, Lakla, Larry, and I made our way up to the scarlet stone that was the doorway to the chamber of the Three. We knew, of course, that they had gone, following, no doubt, those whose eyes I had seen in the curdled mists, and who, coming to the aid of the Three at last from whatever mysterious place that was their home, had thrown their strength with them against the Shining One. Nor were we wrong. When the great slab rolled away, no torrents of opalescence came rushing out upon us. The vast dome was dim, tenantless; its curved walls that had cascaded light shone now but faintly; the dais was empty; its wall of moon-flame radiance gone.

A little time we stood, heads bent, reverent, our hearts filled with gratitude and love—yes, and with pity for that strange trinity so alien to us and yet so near; children even as we, though so unlike us, of our same Mother Earth.

And what I wondered had been the secret of that promise they had wrung from their handmaiden and from Larry. And whence, if what the Three had said had been all true—whence had come their power to avert the sacrifice at the very verge of its consummation?

"Love is stronger than all things!" had said Lakla.

Was it that they had needed, must have, the force which dwells within love, within willing sacrifice, to strengthen their own power and to enable them to destroy the evil, glorious Thing so long shielded by their own love? Did the thought of sacrifice, the will toward abnegation, have to be as strong as the eternals, unshaken by faintest thrill of hope, before the Three could make of it their key to unlock the Dweller's guard and strike through at its life.

HERE was a mystery—a mystery indeed! Lakla softly closed the crimson stone. The mystery of the red dwarfs' appearance was explained when we discovered a half-dozen of the water *coria* moored in a small cove not far from where the *Sekta* flashed their heads of living bloom. The dwarfs had borne the shallows with them, and from somewhere beyond the cavern ledge had launched them unperceived; stealing up to the farther side of the island and risking all in one bold stroke. Well, Lugar, no matter what he held of wickedness, held also high courage.

The cavern was paved with the dead-alive, the *akka* carrying them out by the hundreds, casting them into the waters. Through the lane down which the Dweller had passed we went as quickly as we could, coming at last to the space where the *coria* waited. And not long after we swung past where the shadow had hung and hovered over the shining depths of the Midnight Pool.

Upon Lakla's insistence we passed on to the palace of Lugar, not to Yolaras's—I do not know why, but go there then she would not. And within one of its columned rooms, maidens of the black-haired folks, the wistfulness, the fear, all gone from their sparkling eyes, served us.

There came to me a huge desire to see the destruction they had told us of the Dweller's lair; to observe for myself whether it was not possible to make a way of entrance and to study its mysteries.

I spoke of this, and to my surprise both the handmaiden and the O'Keefe showed an almost embarrassed haste to acquiesce in my hesitant suggestion.

"Sure," cried Larry, "there's lots of time before night!"

He caught himself sheepishly; cast a glance at Lakla.

"I keep forgettin' there's no night here," he murmured.

"What did you say, Larry?" asked she.

"I said I wish we were sitting in our home in Ireland, watching the sun go down," he whispered to her. Vaguely I wondered why she blushed.

But now I must hasten. We went to the temple; and here at least the ghastly litter of the dead had been cleaned away. We passed through the blue-caverned space, crossed the narrow arch that spanned the rushing sea stream, and, ascending, stood again upon the ivored pave at the foot of the frowning, towering amphitheatre of jet.

Across the Silver Waters there was sign of neither Web of Rainbows nor colossal pillars nor

the templed lips that I had seen curving out beneath the Veil when the Shining One had swirled out to greet its priestess and its voice and to dance with the sacrifices. There was but a broken and rent mass of the radiant cliffs against whose base the lake lapped.

Long I looked—and turned away saddened. Knowing even as I did what the irised curtain had hidden, still it was as though some thing of supernal beauty and wonder had been swept away, never to be replaced; a glamour gone forever; a work of the high gods destroyed.

"Let's go back," said Larry abruptly.

I dropped a little behind them to examine a bit of carving—and, after all, they did not want me. I watched them pacing slowly ahead, his arm around her, black hair close to bronze-gold ringlets. Then I followed. Half were they over the bridge when through the roar of the imprisoned stream I heard my name called softly.

"Goodwin! Dr. Goodwin!"

Amazed, I turned. From behind the pedestal of a carved group slunk—*von Hetzdorp!* My premonition had been right. Some way he had escaped, slipped through to here. He held his hands high, came forward cautiously.

"I am finished—" he whispered—"kaput! I don't know what *they'll* do to me." He nodded toward the handmaiden and Larry, now at the end of the bridge and passing on, oblivious of all save each other. He drew closer. His eyes were sunken, burning, mad; his face etched with deep lines, as though a graver's tool had cut down through it. I took a step backward.

A grin, like the grimace of a fiend, blasted the German visage. He threw himself upon me, his hands clutching at my throat!

"Larry!" I yelled—and as I spun around under the shock of his onslaught, saw the two turn, stand paralyzed, then race toward me.

"But you'll carry nothing out of here!" shrieked von Hetzdorp. "No, by God!"

**M**Y foot, darting out behind me, touched vacancy. The roaring of the racing sea stream deafened me. I felt its mists about me; threw myself forward.

I was falling—falling—with the German's hands strangling me. I struck water, sank; the hands that gripped my throat relaxed for a moment their clutch. I strove to writhe loose; felt that I was being hurled with dreadful speed on—full realization came—on the breast of that racing torrent dropping from some far ocean cleft and rushing—where? A little time, a few breathless instants, I struggled with the devil who clutched me—inflexibly, indomitably.

Then a shrieking as of all the pent winds of the universe in my ears—blackness!

Consciousness returned slowly, agonized.

"Larry!" I groaned. "Lakla!"

A brilliant light was glowing through my closed lids. It hurt. I opened my eyes, closed them with swords and needles of dazzling pain shooting through them. Again I opened them cautiously. It was the sun!

I staggered to my feet. Behind me was a shattered wall of basalt monoliths, hewn and squared. Before me was the Pacific, smooth and blue and smiling.

And not far away, cast up on the strand even as I had been, was—*von Hetzdorp!*

He lay there, broken and dead indeed. Yet all the waters through which we had passed—not even the waters of death themselves—could wash from his face the grin of triumph. With the last of my strength I dragged the body from the strand and pushed it out into the waves. A little billow ran up, coiled about it, and carried it away, ducking and bending. Another seized it, and another, playing with it. It floated from my sight—that which had been *von Hetzdorp*, with all his schemes to turn our fair world into an undreamed-of hell.

My strength began to come back to me. I found a thicket and slept; slept it must have been for many hours, for when I again awakened the dawn was rising the east. I will not tell my sufferings. Suffice it to say that I found a spring and some fruit, and just before dusk had recovered enough to writh up to the top of the wall and discover where I was.

The place was one of the farther islets of the Nan-Matal. To the north I caught the shadow of the ruins of Nan-Tauach, where was the moon door, black against the sky. Where was the moon door—which, somehow, I must reach, and quickly!

At dawn of the next day I got together driftwood and bound it together in shape of a rough raft with fallen creepers. Then, with a make-shift paddle, I set forth for Nan-Tauach. Slowly, painfully, I crept up to it. It was late afternoon before I grounded my shaky craft on the little beach between the ruined sea-gates and, creeping up the giant steps, made my way to the inner enclosure.

And at its opening I stopped, and the tears ran streaming down my cheeks while I wept aloud with sorrow and disappointment and weariness.

For the great wall in which had been set the pale slab whose threshold we had crossed to the land of the Shining One lay shattered and broken. The monoliths were heaped about; the wall had fallen, and about them shone a film of water, half covering them.

There was no moon door!

Dazed and weeping, I drew closer, climbed upon their outlying fragments. I looked out only upon sea. There had been a great subsidence, an earth shock perhaps, tilting downward all that side—the echo, little doubt, of that cataclysm which had blasted the Dweller's lair!

The little squared islet called Tau, in which were hidden the seven globes, had entirely disappeared. Upon the waters there was no trace of it.

The moon door was gone; the passage to the Moon Pool was closed to me—its chamber covered by the sea!

There was no road to Larry—nor to Lakla!

\* \* \* \* \*

This, you who have listened to me so long, is the end of my narrative.

(Continued on page 410.)







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**THE UNMATERIALIZED FUTURE**

**Editor, AMAZING STORIES:**

I have read nearly all your issues up to the present time and have enjoyed them very much. In particular, I liked Murray Leinster's stories and in the current issue, I liked all but "The Man Who Died by Proxy." However, in the "Time Machine," I found something amiss. It could one day travel to the future, a situation where beings of the future have not yet materialized.

In your discussion department I read some requests for a bi-monthly issue of AMAZING STORIES. I wish to add to these requests my own urgent appeal. I think that AMAZING STORIES would be even more of a success than it is now. Hoping you will heed the requests for a bi-monthly magazine.

JACKSON BECK,  
New York City.

I remember these stories are fictional, and that the science in them must have some touch of plausibility. The whole fabric could lose its interest, if it hadn't elasticity enough in it to be stretchable. You must remember that what we are doing today every twenty-five years ago would have been pronounced impossible.—EDITOR.]

**OUR CRITICS CRITICIZED**

**Editor, AMAZING STORIES:**

After reading the variety of letters contained in your department, "Discussions," I couldn't resist contributing my bit.

Many letters from your readers contain criticisms of stories as unfair and narrow-minded. I have in mind the letter from Prof. Jack E. Edwards, reproduced in the January issue, and others. In the first paragraph he complains of the publication of stories by Jules Verne, on the ground that they were not original. He goes on to say that he has written a story on the same subject and goes on to criticize the author of "Station X" for writing what he considers an absurdity.

Somewhat in line with this bigoted criticism is that found in many of your critics' issues concerning the "Ku Klux Klan." I consider that such criticisms often unjust and always unfair. Even if the critics were correct it wouldn't be justified. They should consider that stories of this type are wanderings into the realm of the imagination and not into the domain of reality. Who criticizes something which they have no means of proving incorrect? Stories of this nature should be read with a little allowance for imagination.

A purpose of a dozen magazine stories, claiming to be true, was never to threshed glarish errors, incredulous and impossible feats and a lot of bunk. In many of these stories the author had to apply the magic wand when he and he holds a long lost relative or hero comes forth, kachoo! and it doesn't last all at once, it melts in the arms of the heroine. If the hero is poor and hardly needs the money, after allowing him to play around for few chapters, the author obligingly finds a treasure or inheritance on his last. How many times has the professor seen in the moving pictures a hero or heroine blown up in the air, falling down a fearful abyss, and in the jaws of death a dozen times, only to come out, in the next reel unsatched and with the hair carefully combed in the middle. Another example of material, which purports to show real life, why should not a cruiser defeat a battleship in a story which is frankly all imagination?

By delving on trifles like these the professor and others are doing themselves much joy otherwise they might have.

If I am correct the purpose of this kind of story is to stimulate the imagination, and to take one's mind off the monotony of life.

You have received many suggestions to convert the magazine from a monthly to a semi-monthly; I heartily endorse the idea. By publishing it twice as often you would be giving twice as much work to the author, you would sell twice as many copies and double your readership. Your suggestion I cannot agree with the suggestion of A. B. Malford to publish one complete long story in the next, a series and a group of short ones in the next. Variety is not only the spice of life, but, in a magazine it is the only way to keep it interesting. In how many would agree on a single author? In my opinion, I do not believe it wise to let an author, however famous, to be the sole attraction. Many with a prejudice against that author would not buy the magazine. Much better would it be to split a story in two parts with two or more authors in the same issue. By publishing it semi-monthly, it would be one complete long story in one month, though in two issues.

MURRAY NESSON,  
New York, N. Y.

Our Discussion Department is designed for the publication of our readers' opinions of the magazine, that they may furnish a discussion of our work, that the good opinions and the unfavorable opinions. But, of course, it is pleasant to receive such a letter as this, which shows a liberal mind on the part of the writer. After all, what is one man's meat another man's poison, and the editor of AMAZING STORIES, he will be careful to know the opinions of the background and profile what he thinks will please his readers.—EDITOR.]

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**(FREE) "Song Writers' Guide."** D-24-123 Elm, Green Bay, Wis.

**STAMP COLLECTING**

**500 DIFFERENT,** 45c; 1,000, 90c. Approvals with references. Singer, 1943 Clinton Ave., New York, N. Y.

**- PROOF -**

**That Classified Advertising in AMAZING STORIES**

**Pays**

**NESTLER RUBBER FUSING COMPANY**  
245 West 55th Street, New York

March 24th, 1937.

**Amazing Stories:** We wish to state that our experience in advertising in the classified columns of "Amazing Stories" has been quite satisfactory, and indicates point to the fact that as time goes on it will represent one of our best mediums.

Cordially yours,

**NESTLER RUBBER FUSING CO., Inc.**

**HENRY C. SCHIERKE**  
1034 72nd Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.  
March 21, 1937.

**Amazing Stories:** My ad in "Amazing Stories" is greatly appreciated to me and is being used and very much liked. Many other people write to me in response to my ad, furthermore the orders come in through your valued magazine increase as the time goes on. I hope you will continue to write and let me know of the above facts.

Very truly yours,

**HENRY C. SCHIERKE.**



## How to Make

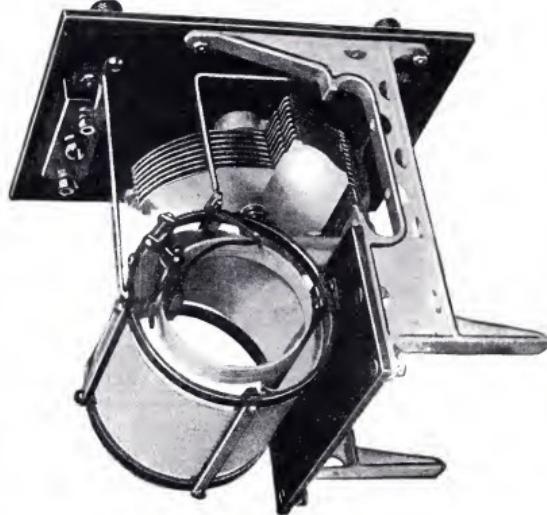
# A SIMPLE WAVE TRAP & CLARIFIER

### It Solves Your Tuning Problem

Every one who owns a radio set has noticed how difficult it is to tune-in the stations desired. This is because there are so many stations now on the air, that the wavelengths have become too crowded for the average radio set to operate satisfactorily.

The only solution to this problem is a Wave Trap. This simple instrument greatly assists in selecting stations on your set. It separates stations that are close together, makes tuning sharper and clearer, and reduces static.

If you want to really enjoy programs and be able to select them at will, you need a Wave Trap.



A rear view of the WAVE TRAP showing the location of the various parts

### Complete Constructional Pattern

Conrad has developed a new series of constructional patterns for radio listeners. The first of these is the Wave Trap shown on the left.

This new pattern contains a gigantic blueprint, size  $27\frac{1}{4}$  inches by  $20\frac{1}{2}$  inches, containing simplified Panel layout, Front View, Top View, Side View and Picture Wiring diagram. All measurements are shown actual size. Also a complete illustrated Pamphlet is enclosed that shows you exactly how to proceed throughout the entire construction; these are enclosed in a heavy folder envelope size  $9\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

Note: This wave trap can be installed in a few seconds. It does not have to be put inside your set.

## 25c AT ALL RADIO DEALERS

If your dealer cannot supply you, write direct to

**THE CONRAD CO., Inc., 230 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y.**

*Announcing---the first*

# AMAZING STORIES "ANNUAL"

# 132 PAGES

*SIZE 9 x 12 INCHES*

Featuring

## The MASTERMIND of MARS

*by*

# EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

*A Remarkable New Story*

by this famous author of the  
"TARZAN" series. Has never  
before been published.

*Also*

A carefully selected group of  
the most important stories that  
have appeared in this magazine  
for the past year.

## 50c THE COPY

**ORDER  
YOUR  
COPY  
NOW**

EXPERIMENTER PUBLISHING CO., Inc.,  
230 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Gentlemen—I enclose 50c for a copy of the AMAZING STORIES ANNUAL.

Name .....

Address .....

City .....

State .....

# BARRETT Pen-Pencil



\$  
**3**

SPECIAL

ACTUAL  
SIZE

## Why carry two when one will do?

**R**EELIEVE your pockets of their usual pen and pencil burden—the Barrett Pen-Pencil is the ideal writing equipment—a big, easy-writing fountain pen and the perfect mechanical pencil in a single compact unit.

The Barrett Pen-Pencil saves time and money for men and women in business, and for boys and girls in school. A beautiful gift at less than half the cost of a separate pen and pencil of equal quality.

Read the distinctive features of the Barrett Pen-Pencil described at the right and study the two full-size illustrations. We are proud of the Barrett Pen-Pencil, for it is a product of superior quality, as well as a most useful novelty. Tell your friends about it—now.

Remember—we stand squarely behind the value of every Barrett Pen-Pencil sold—**Your money back** if you are willing to part with it after five days' trial.

Fill in the coupon—and mail it **TODAY**.

Barrett Special—Handsome, perfect, two-in-one pen and pencil for both men and women. Woman's model has ring in cap for ribbon; instead of clip for pocket. Material and workmanship of guaranteed quality . . . . . \$3.00

Barrett Jumbo—For those who use a pen or pencil constantly, a large, heavy reservoir and a heavy-duty cold-painted light in weight and beautifully balanced. The best word in fountain pen and mechanical pencil perfection.

Name engraved in white, yellow, red, or gold, 25c.

*Dealers and Agents!  
Write for special proposition*

**COMBINATION PEN-PENCIL CO.**

Graybar Building, Suite 1457  
420 Lexington Avenue, New York City

Combination Pen-Pencil Co., Suite 1457, 420 Lexington Ave., New York City  
Please send me . . . . . Barrett Pen-Pencil (either "Special" or "Jumbo") . . . . .  
I enclose \$3.00 (less off one not needed) postage paid. If not satisfied,  
I can return same and you will refund my money. I want a "cold"  
pencil (not a "soft"). Please send me . . . . .  
I enclose a check or money order for \$ . . . . . plus 12¢ postage.  
I will pay the postman . . . . .  
Name . . . . .  
Address . . . . .  
City . . . . .  
State . . . . .  
Age . . . . .

*Every BARRETT  
PEN-PENCIL has—*  
Combination fountain pen  
and mechanical pencil in  
a single unit.  
Barrel looks like polished  
ebony, with 14-K gold  
plated trim. Solid 14-K  
14-K solid gold pen  
point, with Iridium tips.  
Pencil action that pre-  
vents breakage and expense.  
Six extra leads in pencil.  
Cap fits either end.

\$  
**4.50**

JUMBO

ACTUAL  
SIZE

